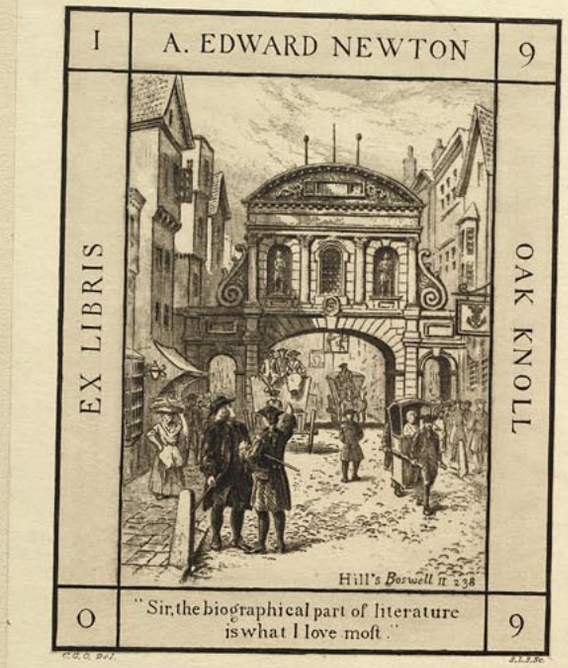
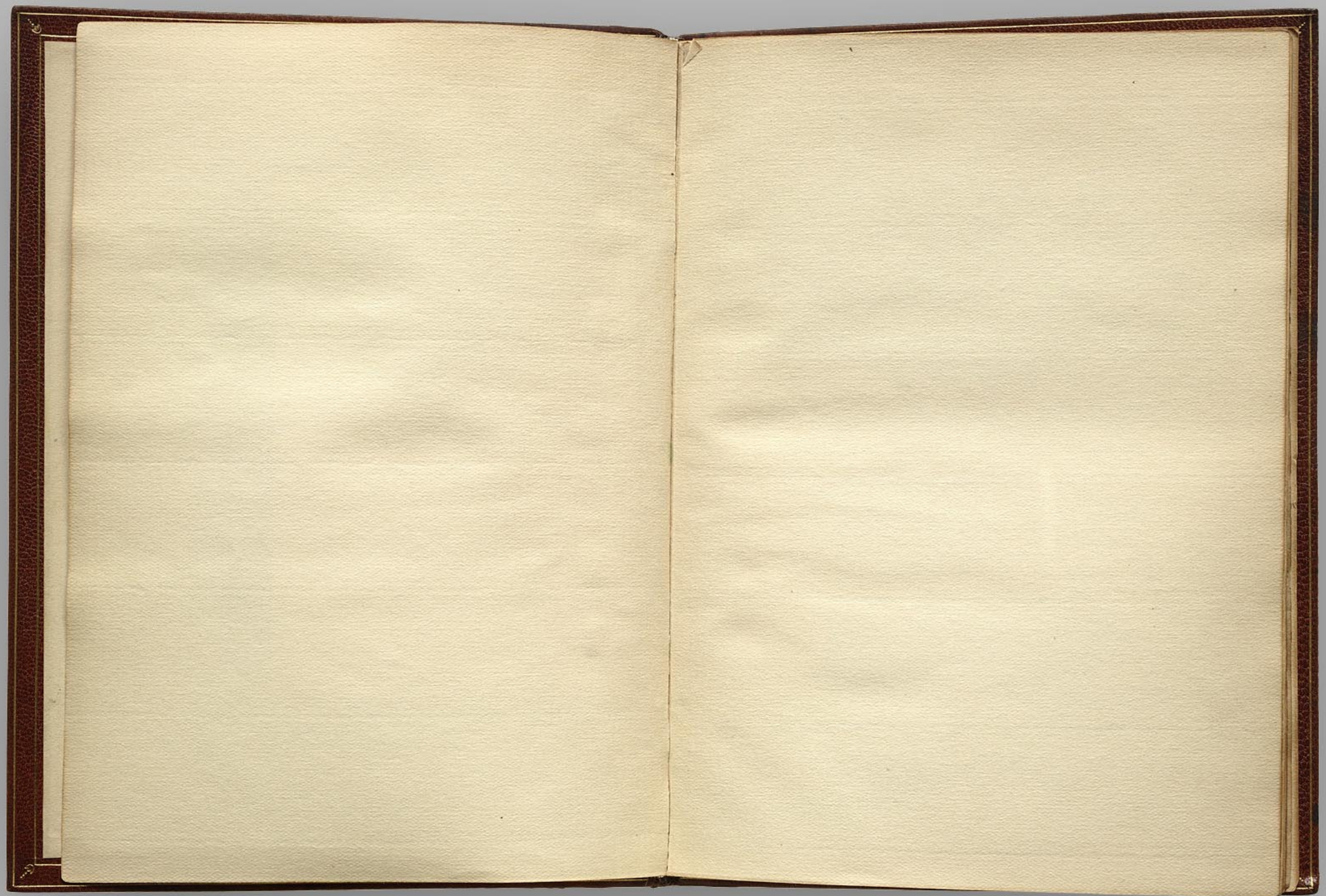
John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY

Octavo™



BRIDWELL LIBRARY
BL
SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY



John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY

Octavo™

AREOPAGITICA;

A

SPEECH

OF

Mr. JOHN MILTON

For the Liberty of VNLICENC'D PRINTING,

To the PARLAMENT of ENGLAND.

Τὼλᾶθεσὼν δ' ἐκεῖνο, εἴ τις θέλοι πόλει
Χρηστὸν τι βάλλειν εἰς μέσον φέρειν, ἔχειν.
Καὶ ταῦθ' ὁ χρήζων, λαμπρὸς ἔβ', ὁ μὴ θέλων,
Σιγᾷ· τί τούτων ἐστὶν ἰσότιμον πόλει;

Euripid. Hicetid.

This is true Liberty when free born men
Having to advise the public may speak free,
Which he who can, and will, deserv's high praise,
Who neither can nor will, may hold his peace;
What can be juster in a State then this?

Euripid. Hicetid.

LONDON,
Printed in the Yeare, 1644.

For the Liberty of unlicenc'd Printing.

THey who to States and Governours of the Commonwealth direct their Speech, High Court of Parlament, or wanting ſuch acceſſe in a private condition, write that which they foreſee may advance the publick good; I ſuppoſe them as at the beginning of no meane endeavour, not a little alter'd and mov'd inwardly in their mindes: Some with doubt of what will be the ſucceſſe, others with feare of what will be the cenſure; ſome with hope, others with confidence of what they have to ſpeake. And me perhaps each of theſe diſpoſitions, as the ſubject was whereon I enter'd, may have at other times variouſly affected; and likely might in theſe formoſt expreſſions now alſo diſcloſe which of them ſway'd moſt, but that the very attempt of this addreſſe thus made, and the thought of whom it hath recourſe to, hath got the power within me to a paſſion, farre more welcome then incidentall to a Preface. Which though I ſtay not to confeſſe ere any aske, I ſhall be blameleſſe, if it be no other, then the joy and gratulation which it brings to all who wiſh and promote their Countries liberty; whereof this whole Diſcourſe propos'd will be a certaine teſtimony, if not a Trophey. For this is not the liberty which wee can hope, that no grievance ever ſhould ariſe in the Commonwealth, that let no man in this World expect; but when complaints are freely heard, deeply conſider'd, and ſpeedily reform'd, then is the utmoſt bound of civill liberty attain'd, that wiſe men looke for. To which if I now manifeſt by the very ſound of this which I ſhall utter, that wee are already in good part arriv'd, and yet from ſuch a ſteepe diſadvantage of tyranny and ſuperſtition grounded into our principles as was beyond the manhood of a *Roman* recovery, it will bee attributed firſt, as is moſt due, to the ſtrong aſſiſtance of God our deliverer, next to your faithfull guidance and undaunted Wiſdome, Lords and Commons of *England*. Neither is it in Gods eſteeme the diminution of his glory, when honourable things are ſpoken of good men and worthy Magiſtrates; which if I now firſt ſhould begin to

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

doe, after ſo fair a progreſſe of your laudable deeds, and ſuch a long obligement upon the whole Realme to your indefatigable vertues, I might be juſtly reckn'd among the tardieſt, and the unwillingeſt of them that praiſe yee. Nevertheleſſe there being three principall things, without which all praiſing is but Courtſhip and flattery, Firſt, when that only is prais'd which is ſolidly worth praiſe: next when greateſt likelihoods are brought that ſuch things are truly and really in thoſe perſons to whom they are aſcrib'd, the other, when he who praiſes, by ſhewing that ſuch his actuall perſwaſion is of whom he writes, can demonſtrate that he flatters not; the former two of theſe I have heretofore endeavour'd, reſcuing the employment from him who went about to impaire your merits with a triviall and malignant *Encomium*; the latter as belonging chiefly to mine owne acquittall, that whom I ſo extoll'd I did not flatter, hath been reſerv'd opportunely to this occaſion. For he who freely magnifies what hath been nobly done, and fears not to declare as freely what might be done better, gives ye the beſt cov'nant of his fidelity; and that his loyaleſt affection and his hope waits on your proceedings. His higheſt praiſing is not flattery, and his plaineſt advice is a kinde of praiſing; for though I ſhould affirme and hold by argument, that it would fare better with truth, with learning, and the Commonwealth, if one of your publiſht Orders which I ſhould name, were call'd in, yet at the ſame time it could not but much redound to the luſtre of your milde and equall Government, when as private perſons are hereby animated to thinke ye better pleas'd with publick advice, then other ſtatiſts have been delighted heretofore with publicke flattery. And men will then ſee what difference there is between the magnanimity of a trienniall Parlament, and that jealous hautineſſe of Prelates and cabin Counſellours that uſurpt of late, when as they ſhall obſerve yee in the midd'ſt of your Victories and ſucceſſes more gently brooking writt'n exceptions againſt a voted Order, then other Courts, which had produc't nothing worth memory but the weake oſtentation of wealth, would have endur'd the leaſt ſignifi'd diſlike at any ſudden Proclamation. If I ſhould thus farre preſume upon the meek demeanour of your civill and gentle greatneſſe, Lords and Commons, as what your publiſht Order hath directly ſaid, that to gainſay, I might defend my ſelfe with eaſe, if any ſhould accuſe me of being new or inſolent, did they but know how much better I find ye eſteem is to imitate the old and elegant humanity of Greece, then

then the barbarick pride of a *Hunniſh* and *Norwegian* ſtatelines. And out of thoſe ages, to whoſe polite wiſdom and letters we ow that we are not yet *Gothes* and *Jutlanders*, I could name him who from his private houſe wrote that diſcourſe to the Parlament of *Athens*, that perſwades them to change the forme of *Democraty* which was then eſtabliſht. Such honour was done in thoſe dayes to men who profeſt the ſtudy of wiſdome and eloquence, not only in their own Country, but in other Lands, that Cities and Siniories heard them gladly, and with great reſpect, if they had ought in publick to admoniſh the State. Thus did *Dion Pruſaus* a ſtranger and a privat Orator counſell the *Rhodians* againſt a former Edict: and I abound with other like examples, which to ſet heer would be ſuperfluous. But if from the induſtry of a life wholly dedicated to ſtudious labours, and thoſe naturall endowments haply not the worſt for two and fifty degrees of northern latitude, ſo much muſt be derogated, as to count me not equall to any of thoſe who had this priviledge, I would obtain to be thought not ſo inferior, as your ſelves are ſuperior to the moſt of them who receiv'd their counſell: and how farre you excell them, be aſſur'd, Lords and Commons, there can no greater teſtimony appear, then when your prudent ſpirit acknowledges and obeyes the voice of reaſon from what quarter ſoever it be heard ſpeaking; and renders ye as willing to repeal any Act of your own ſetting forth, as any ſet forth by your Predeceſſors.

If ye be thus reſolv'd, as it were injury to thinke ye were not, I know not what ſhould withhold me from preſenting ye with a fit inſtance wherein to ſhew both that love of truth which ye eminently profeſſe, and that uprightneſſe of your judgement which is not wont to be partiall to your ſelves; by judging over again that Order which ye have ordain'd *to regulate Printing. That no Book, pamphlet, or paper ſhall be henceforth Printed, unleſſe the ſame be firſt approv'd and licenc't by ſuch*, or at leaſt one of ſuch as ſhall be thereto appointed. For that part which preſerves juſtly every mans Copy to himſelfe, or provides for the poor, I touch not, only wiſh they be not made pretenſes to abuſe and perſecute honeſt and painfull Men, who offend not in either of theſe particulars. But that other clauſe of Licencing Books, which we thought had dy'd with his brother *quadrageſimal* and *matrimonial* when the Prelats expir'd, I ſhall now attend with ſuch a Homily, as ſhall lay before ye, firſt the inventors of it to bee thoſe whom ye will be loath to own; next what is to be thought in

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

generall of reading, what ever sort the Books be; and that this Order avails nothing to the suppressing of scandalous, seditious, and libellous Books, which were mainly intended to be suppreſt. Last, that it will be primely to the discouragement of all learning, and the stop of Truth, not only by diſexercising and blunting our abilities in what we know already, but by hindring and cropping the discovery that might bee yet further made both in religious and civill Wisdome.

I deny not, but that it is of greatest concernment in the Church and Commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how Bookes demeane themselves, as well as men; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors: For Books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soule was whose progeny they are; nay they do preserve as in a violl the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous Dragons teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet on the other hand unlesse warinesse be us'd, as good almost kill a Man as kill a good Book; who kills a Man kills a reasonable creature, Gods Image; but hee who destroyes a good Booke, kills reason it selfe, kills the Image of God, as it were in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the Earth; but a good Booke is the pretious life-blood of a master spirit, imbalm'd and treasur'd up on purpose to a life beyond life. 'Tis true, no age can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great losse; and revolutions of ages doe not oft recover the losse of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole Nations fare the worse. We should be wary therefore what persecution we raise against the living labours of publick men, how we spill that season'd life of man preserv'd and stor'd up in Books; since we see a kinde of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdome, and if it extend to the whole impression, a kinde of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elementall life, but strikes at that ethereall and and fift essence, the breath of reason it selfe, slaies an immortality rather then a life. But lest I should be condemn'd of introducing licence, while I oppose Licencing, I refuse not the paines to be so much Historicall, as will serve to shew what hath been done by ancient and famous Commonwealths, against this disorder, till the very time that this project of licencing crept out of the *Inquisition*, was catcht up by

by our Prelates, and hath caught some of our Presbyters.

In *Athens* where Books and Wits were ever busier then in any other part of *Greece*, I finde but only two sorts of writings which the Magistrate car'd to take notice of; those either blasphemous and Atheisticall, or Libellous. Thus the Books of *Protagoras* were by the Iudges of *Areopagus* commanded to be burnt, and himselfe banisht the territory for a discourse begun with his confessing not to know *whether there were gods, or whether not:* And against defaming, it was decreed that none should be traduc'd by name, as was the manner of *Vetus Comœdia*, whereby we may guesse how they censur'd libelling: And this course was quick enough, as *Cicero* writes, to quell both the desperate wits of other Atheists, and the open way of defaming, as the event shew'd. Of other sects and opinions though tending to voluptuousnesse, and the denying of divine providence they tooke no heed. Therefore we do not read that either *Epicurus*, or that libertine school of *Cyrene*, or what the *Cynick* impudence utter'd, was ever question'd by the Laws. Neither is it recorded that the writings of those old Comedians were suppreſt, though the acting of them were forbid; and that *Plato* commended the reading of *Aristophanes* the looseſt of them all, to his royall scholler *Dionysius*, is commonly known, and may be excus'd, if holy *Chrysostome*, as is reported, nightly studied so much the same Author and had the art to cleanse a scurrilous vehemence into the stile of a rousing Sermon. That other leading City of *Greece*, *Lacedæmon*, considering that *Lycurgus* their Law-giver was so addicted to elegant learning, as to have been the first that brought out of *Ionia* the scatter'd workes of *Homer*, and sent the Poet *Thales* from *Creet* to prepare and mollifie the *Spartan* surlinesse with his smooth songs and odes, the better to plant among them law and civility, it is to be wonder'd how museleſſe and unbookish they were, minding nought but the feats of Warre. There needed no licencing of Books among them for they dislik'd all, but their owne *Laconick Apothegms*, and took a slight occasion to chase *Archilochus* out of their City, perhaps for composing in a higher straine then their owne souldierly ballats and roundels could reach to: Or if it were for his broad verses, they were not therein so cautious, but they were as dissolute in their promiscuous conversing; whence *Euripides* affirmes in *Andromache*, that their women were all unchaste. Thus much may give us light after what sort Bookes were prohibited among the Greeks. The Romans also for many ages train'd up only

ly

ly to a military roughnes, resembling most the *Lacedemonian* guise; knew of learning little but what their twelve Tables, and the *Pontifick* College with their *Augurs* and *Flamins* taught them in Religion and Law, so unacquainted with other learning, that when *Carneades* and *Critolaus*, with the *Stoick Diogenes* comming Embassadors to *Rome*, tooke thereby occasion to give the City a tast of their Philosophy, they were suspected for seducers by no lesse a man then *Cato* the Censor, who mov'd it in the Senat to dismisse them speedily, and to banish all such *Attick* bablers out of *Italy*. But *Scipio* and others of the noblest Senators withstood him and his old *Sabin* austerity; honour'd and admir'd the men; and the Censor himself at last in his old age fell to the study of that whereof before hee was so scrupulous. And yet at the same time *Navius* and *Plautus* the first Latine comedians had fill'd the City with all the borrow'd Scenes of *Menander* and *Philemon*. Then began to be consider'd there also what was to be don to libellous books and Authors; for *Nevius* was quickly cast into prison for his unbridl'd pen, and releas'd by the *Tribunes* upon his recantation: We read also that libels were burnt, and the makers punisht by *Augustus*. The like severity no doubt was us'd if ought were impiously writt'n against their esteemed gods. Except in these two points, how the world went in Books, the Magistrat kept no reckning. And therefore *Lucretius* without impeachment versifies his Epicurism to *Memmius*, and had the honour to be set forth the second time by *Cicero* so great a father of the Commonwealth; although himselfe disputes against that opinion in his own writings. Nor was the Satyricall sharpnesse, or naked plainnes of *Lucilius*, or *Catullus*, or *Flaccus*, by any order prohibited. And for matters of State, the story of *Titus Livius*, though it extoll'd that part which *Pompey* held, was not therefore suppresst by *Octavius Cæsar* of the other Faction. But that *Naso* was by him banisht in his old age, for the wanton Poems of his youth, was but a meer covert of State over some secret cause: and besides, the Books were neither banisht nor call'd in. From hence we shall meet with little else but tyranny in the Roman Empire, that we may not marvell, if not so often bad, as good Books were silenc't. I shall therefore deem to have bin large anough in producing what among the ancients was punishable to write, save only which, all other arguments were free to treat on.

By this time the Emperors were become Christians, whose discipline in this point I doe not finde to have bin more severe then what was

was formerly in practice. The Books of those whom they took to be grand Hereticks were examin'd, refuted, and condemn'd in the generall Councels; and not till then were prohibited, or burnt by autority of the Emperor. As for the writings of Heathen authors, unlesse they were plaine invectives against Christianity, as those of *Porphyrius* and *Proclus*, they met with no interdict that can be cited, till about the year 400. in a *Carthaginian* Councel, wherein Bishops themselves were forbid to read the Books of Gentiles, but Heresies they might read: while others long before them on the contrary scrupl'd more the Books of Hereticks, then of Gentiles. And that the primitive Councels and Bishops were wont only to declare what Books were not commendable, passing no furder, but leaving it to each ones conscience to read or to lay by, till after the yeare 800. is observ'd already by *Padre Paolo* the great unmasker of the *Trentine* Councel. After which time the Popes of *Rome* engrossing what they pleas'd of Politicall rule into their owne hands, extended their dominion over mens eyes, as they had before over their judgements, burning and prohibiting to be read, what they fansied not; yet sparing in their censures, and the Books not many which they so dealt with: till *Martin* the 5. by his Bull not only prohibited, but was the first that excommunicated the reading of hereticall Books; for about that time *Wicklef* and *Husse* growing terrible, were they who first drove the Papall Court to a stricter policy of prohibiting. Which cours *Leo* the 10, and his successors follow'd, untill the Councell of Trent, and the Spanish Inquisition engendring together brought forth, or perfeted those Catalogues, and expurging Indexes that rake through the entralls of many an old good Author, with a violation wors then any could be offer'd to his tomb. Nor did they stay in matters Hereticall, but any subject that was not to their palat, they either condemn'd in a prohibition, or had it strait into the new Purgatory of an Index. To fill up the measure of encroachment, their last invention was to ordain that no Book, pamphlet, or paper should be Printed (as if S. *Peter* had bequeath'd them the keys of the Presse also out of Paradise) unlesse it were approv'd and licenc't under the hands of 2 or 3 glutton Friers. For example:

Let the Chancellor *Cini* be pleas'd to see if in this present work be contain'd ought that may withstand the Printing,

Vincent Rabatta Vicar of *Florence*.

I have

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

I have seen this present work, and finde nothing athwart the Catholick faith and good manners: In witnesse whereof I have given, &c.

Nicolò Cini Chancellor of *Florence.*

Attending the precedent relation, it is allow'd that this present work of *Davanzati* may be Printed,

Vincent Rabatta, &c.

It may be Printed, *July* 15.

Friar *Simon Mompei d' Amelia* Chancellor of the holy office in *Florence.*

Sure they have a conceit, if he of the bottomlesse pit had not long since broke prison, that this quadruple exorcism would barre him down. I feare their next designe will be to get into their custody the licencing of that which they say *Claudius* intended, but went not through with. Vouchsafe to see another of their forms the Roman stamp:

Imprimatur, If it seem good to the reverend Master of the holy Palace,

Belcastro Vicegerent.

Imprimatur

Friar *Nicolò Rodolphi* Master of the holy Palace.

Sometimes 5 *Imprimaturs* are seen together dialogue-wise in the Piatza of one Title page, complementing and ducking each to other with their shav'n reverences, whether the Author, who stands by in perplexity at the foot of his Epistle, shall to the Presse or to the spunge. These are the prety responsories, these are the deare Antiphonies that so bewitcht of late our Prelats, and their Chaplaines with the goodly Ecchо they made; and besotted us to the gay imitation of a lordly *Imprimatur*, one from Lambeth house, another from the West end of *Pauls*; so apishly Romanizing, that the word of command still was set downe in Latine; as if the learned Grammaticall pen that wrote it, would cast no ink without Latine: or perhaps, as they thought, because no vulgar tongue was worthy to expresse the pure conceit of an *Imprimatur*; but rather, as I hope, for that our English, the language of men ever famous, and formost in the atchievements of liberty, will not easily finde servile letters anow to spell such a dictatorie presumption English. And thus ye have the Inventors and the originall of Book-licencing ript up, and drawn as lineally as any pedigree. We have it not, that can be heard of, from any ancient

Quo vesam data flatum spiritum e ventris convi- emitdi. Sue. in audio.

ancient State, or politie, or Church, nor by any Statute left us by our Ancestors elder or later; nor from the moderne custom of any reformed Citty, or Church abroad; but from the most Antichristian Councel, and the most tyrannous Inquisition that ever inquir'd. Till then Books were ever as freely admitted into the World as any other birth; the issue of the brain was no more stifl'd then the issue of the womb: no envious *Juno* sate crosse-leg'd over the nativity of any mans intellectuall off-spring; but if it prov'd a Monster, who denies, but that it was justly burnt, or sunk into the Sea. But that a Book in wors condition then a peccant soul, should be to stand before a Jury ere it be borne to the World, and undergo yet in darknesse the judgement of *Radamanth* and his Collegues, ere it can passe the ferry backward into light, was never heard before, till that mysterious iniquity provokt and troubl'd at the first entrance of Reformation, sought out new limbo's and new hells wherein they might include our Books also within the number of their damned. And this was the rare morsell so officiously snatcht up, and so ilfavourdly imitated by our inquisiturient Bishops, and the attendant minorites their Chaplains. That ye like not now these most certain Authors of this licencing order, and that all sinister intention was farre distant from your thoughts, when ye were importun'd the passing it, all men who know the integrity of your actions, and how ye honour Truth, will clear yee readily.

But some will say, What though the Inventors were bad, the thing for all that may be good? It may so; yet if that thing be no such deep invention, but obvious, and easie for any man to light on, and yet best and wisest Commonwealths through all ages, and occasions have forborne to use it, and falsest seducers, and oppressors of men were the first who tooke it up, and to no other purpose but to obstruct and hinder the first approach of Reformation; I am of those who beleeve, it will be a harder alchymy then *Lullius* ever knew, to sublimat any good use out of such an invention. Yet this only is what I request to gain from this reason, that it may be held a dangerous and suspicious fruit, as certainly it deserves, for the tree that bore it, untill I can dissect one by one the properties it has. But I have first to finish, as was propounded, what is to be thought in generall of reading Books, what ever sort they be, and whether be more the benefit, or the harm that thence proceeds?

Not to insist upon the examples of *Moses*, *Daniel* & *Paul*, who were

 skilfull

John Milton. *Areopagitica.* London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

skilfull in all the learning of the Ægyptians, Caldeans, and Greeks, which could not probably be without reading their Books of all sorts, in *Paul* especially, who thought it no defilement to insert into holy Scripture the sentences of three Greek Poets, and one of them a Tragedian, the question was, notwithstanding sometimes controverted among the Primitive Doctors, but with great odds on that side which affirm'd it both lawfull and profitable, as was then evidently perceiv'd, when *Julian* the Apostat, and suttlest enemy to our faith, made a decree forbidding Christians the study of heathen learning: for, said he, they wound us with our own weapons, and with our owne arts and sciences they overcome us. And indeed the Christians were put so to their shifts by this crafty means, and so much in danger to decline into all ignorance, that the two *Apollinarii* were fain as a man may say, to coin all the seven liberall Sciences out of the Bible, reducing it into divers forms of Orations, Poems, Dialogues, ev'n to the calculating of a new Christian Grammar. But saith the Historian *Socrates*, The providence of God provided better then the industry of *Apollinarius* and his son, by taking away that illiterat law with the life of him who devis'd it. So great an injury they then held it to be depriv'd of *Hellenick* learning; and thought it a persecution more undermining, and secretly decaying the Church, then the open cruelty of *Decius* or *Diocletian*. And perhaps it was the same politick drift that the Divell whipt St. *Jerom* in a lenten dream, for reading *Cicero*; or else it was a fantasm bred by the feaver which had then seis'd him. For had an Angel bin his discipliner, unlesse it were for dwelling too much upon Ciceronianisms, & had chastiz'd the reading, not the vanity, it had bin plainly partiall; first to correct him for grave *Cicero*, and not for scurrill *Plautus* whom he confesses to have bin reading not long before; next to correct him only, and let so many more ancient Fathers wax old in those pleasant and florid studies without the lash of such a tutoring apparition; insomuch that *Basil* teaches how some good use may be made of *Margites* a sportfull Poem, not now extant, writ by *Homer*; and why not then of *Morgante* an Italian Romanze much to the same purpose. But if it be agreed we shall be try'd by visions, there is a vision recorded by *Eusebius* far ancienter then this tale of *Jerom* to the Nun *Eustochium*, and besides has nothing of a feavor in it. *Dionysius Alexandrinus* was about the year 240, a person of great name in the Church for piety and learning, who had wont to avail himself much against hereticks by be-

being conversant in their Books; untill a certain Presbyter laid it scrupulously to his conscience, how he durst venture himselfe among those defiling volumes. The worthy man loath to give offence fell into a new debate with himselfe what was to be thought; when suddenly a vision sent from God, it is his own Epistle that so averrs it, confirm'd him in these words: Read any books what ever come to thy hands, for thou art sufficient both to judge aright, and to examine each matter. To this revelation he assented the sooner, as he confesses, because it was answerable to that of the Apostle to the Thessalonians, Prove all things, hold fast that which is good. And he might have added another remarkable saying of the same Author; To the pure all things are pure, not only meats and drinks, but all kinde of knowledge whether of good or evill; the knowledge cannot defile, nor consequently the books, if the will and conscience be not defil'd. For books are as meats and viands are; some of good, some of evill substance; and yet God in that unapocryphall vision, said without exception, Rise *Peter*, kill and eat, leaving the choice to each mans discretion. Wholesome meats to a vitiated stomack differ little or nothing from unwholesome; and best books to a naughty mind are not unappliable to occasions of evill. Bad meats will scarce breed good nourishment in the healthiest concoction; but herein the difference is of bad books, that they to a discreet and judicious Reader serve in many respects to discover, to confute, to forewarn, and to illustrate. Whereof what better witnes can ye expect I should produce, then one of your own now sitting in Parlament, the chief of learned men reputed in this Land, Mr. *Selden*, whose volume of naturall & national laws proves, not only by great autorities brought together, but by exquisite reasons and theorems almost mathematically demonstrative, that all opinions, yea errors, known, read, and collated, are of main service & assistance toward the speedy attainment of what is truest. I conceive therefore, that when God did enlarge the universall diet of mans body, saving ever the rules of temperance, he then also, as before, left arbitrary the dyeting and repasting of our minds; as wherein every mature man might have to exercise his owne leading capacity. How great a vertue is temperance, how much of moment through the whole life of man? yet God committs the managing so great a trust, without particular Law or prescription, wholly to the demeanour of every grown man. And therefore when he himself tabl'd the Jews from heaven, that Omer which was every mans daily portion of

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

Manna, is computed to have bin more then might have well ſuffic'd the heartieſt feeder thrice as many meals. For thoſe actions which enter into a man, rather then iſſue out of him, and therefore defile not, God uſes not to captivat under a perpetuall childhood of preſcription, but truſts him with the gift of reaſon to be his own chooſer; there were but little work left for preaching, if law and compulſion ſhould grow ſo faſt upon thoſe things which hertofore were govern'd only by exhortation. *Salomon* informs us that much reading is a wearines to the fleſh; but neither he, nor other inſpir'd author tells us that ſuch, or ſuch reading is unlawfull: yet certainly had God thought good to limit us herein, it had bin much more expedient to have told us what was unlawfull, then what was weariſome. As for the burning of thoſe Epheſian books by St. *Pauls* converts, tis reply'd the books were magick, the Syriack ſo renders them. It was a privat act, a voluntary act, and leaves us to a voluntary imitation: the men in remorſe burnt thoſe books which were their own; the Magiſtrat by this example is not appointed: theſe men practiz'd the books, another might perhaps have read them in ſome ſort uſefully. Good and evill we know in the field of this World grow up together almoſt inſeparably; and the knowledge of good is ſo involv'd and interwoven with the knowledge of evill, and in ſo many cunning reſemblances hardly to be diſcern'd, that thoſe confuſed ſeeds which were impos'd on *Pſyche* as an inceſſant labour to cull out, and ſort aſunder, were not more intermixt. It was from out the rinde of one apple taſted, that the knowledge of good and evill as two twins cleaving together leapt forth into the World. And perhaps this is that doom which *Adam* fell into of knowing good and evill, that is to ſay of knowing good by evill. As therefore the ſtate of man now is; what wiſdome can there be to chooſe, what continence to forbeare without the knowledge of evill? He that can apprehend and conſider vice with all her baits and ſeeming pleaſures, and yet abſtain, and yet diſtinguiſh, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Chriſtian. I cannot praiſe a fugitive and cloiſter'd vertue, unexercis'd & unbreath'd, that never ſallies out and ſees her adverſary, but ſlinks out of the race, where that immortall garland is to be run for, not without duſt and heat. Aſſuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is triall, and triall is by what is contrary. That vertue therefore which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evill, and knows not the utmoſt that

that vice promiſes to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank vertue, not a pure; her whiteneſſe is but an excrementall whiteneſſe; Which was the reaſon why our ſage and ſerious Poet *Spencer*, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher then *Scotus* or *Aquinas*, deſcribing true temperance under the perſon of *Guion*, brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon, and the bowr of earthly bliſſe that he might ſee and know, and yet abſtain. Since therefore the knowledge and ſurvay of vice is in this world ſo neceſſary to the conſtituting of human vertue, and the ſcanning of error to the confirmation of truth, how can we more ſafely, and with leſſe danger ſcout into the regions of ſin and falſity then by reading all manner of tractats, and hearing all manner of reaſon? And this is the benefit which may be had of books promiſcuouſly read. But of the harm that may reſult hence three kinds are uſually reckn'd. Firſt, is fear'd the infection that may ſpread; but then all human learning and controverſie in religious points muſt remove out of the world, yea the Bible it ſelfe; for that oftimes relates blaſphemy not nicely, it deſcribes the carnall ſenſe of wicked men not unelegantly, it brings in holieſt men paſſionately murmuring againſt providence through all the arguments of *Epicurus*: in other great diſputes it anſwers dubiouſly and darkly to the common reader: And ask a Talmudiſt what ails the modeſty of his marginall Keri, that *Moſes* and all the Prophets cannot perſwade him to pronounce the textuall Chetiv. For theſe cauſes we all know the Bible it ſelfe put by the Papiſt into the firſt rank of prohibited books. The ancienteſt Fathers muſt be next remov'd, as *Clement* of *Alexandria*, and that *Euſebian* book of Evangelick preparation, tranſmitting our ears through a hoard of heatheniſh obſcenities to receive the Goſpel. Who finds not that *Irenæus*, *Epiphanius*, *Jerom*, and others diſcover more hereſies then they well confute, and that oft for hereſie which is the truer opinion. Nor boots it to ſay for theſe, and all the heathen Writers of greateſt infection, if it muſt be thought ſo, with whom is bound up the life of human learning, that they writ in an unknown tongue, ſo long as we are ſure thoſe languages are known as well to the worſt of men, who are both moſt able, and moſt diligent to inſtill the poiſon they ſuck, firſt into the Courts of Princes, acquainting them with the choiſeſt delights, and criticiſms of ſin. As perhaps did that *Petronius* whom *Nero* call'd his *Arbiter*, the Maſter of his revels; and that notorious ribald of *Arezzo*, dreaded, and yet dear to the Italian Courtiers. I name not him for poſterities ſake, whom

Harry

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

Harry the 8. nam'd in merriment his Vicar of hell. By which compendious way all the contagion that foreine books can infuſe, will finde a paſſage to the people farre eaſier and ſhorter then an Indian voyage, though it could be ſail'd either by the North of *Cataio* Eaſtward, or of *Canada* Weſtward, while our Spaniſh licencing gags the Engliſh Preſſe never ſo ſeverely. But on the other ſide that infection which is from books of controverſie in Religion, is more doubtfull and dangerous to the learned, then to the ignorant; and yet thoſe books muſt be permitted untoucht by the licencer. It will be hard to inſtance where any ignorant man hath bin ever ſeduc't by Papiſticall book in Engliſh, unleſſe it were commended and expounded to him by ſome of that Clergy: and indeed all ſuch tractats whether falſe or true are as the Propheſie of *Iſaiah* was to the *Eunuch*, not to be *underſtood without a guide*. But of our Prieſts and Doctors how many have bin corrupted by ſtudying the comments of Jeſuits and *Sorboniſts*, and how faſt they could transfuſe that corruption into the people, our experience is both late and ſad. It is not forgot, ſince the acute and diſtinct *Arminius* was perverted meerly by the peruſing of a nameleſſe diſcours writt'n at *Delf*, which at firſt he took in hand to confute. Seeing therefore that thoſe books, & thoſe in great abundance which are likelieſt to taint both life and doctrine, cannot be ſuppreſt without the fall of learning, and of all ability in diſputation, and that theſe books of either ſort are moſt and ſooneſt catching to the learned, from whom to the common people what ever is hereticall or diſſolute may quickly be convey'd, and that evill manners are as perfectly learnt without books a thouſand other ways which cannot be ſtopt, and evill doctrine not with books can propagate, except a teacher guide, which he might alſo doe without writing, and ſo beyond prohibiting, I am not able to unfold, how this cautelous enterpriſe of licencing can be exempted from the number of vain and impoſſible attempts. And he who were pleaſantly diſpos'd, could not well avoid to lik'n it to the exploit of that gallant man who thought to pound up the crows by ſhutting his Parkgate. Beſides another inconvenience, if learned men be the firſt receivers out of books & diſpredders both of vice and error, how ſhall the licencers themſelves be confided in, unleſſe we can conferr upon them, or they aſſume to themſelves above all others in the Land, the grace of infallibility, and uncorruptedneſſe? And again if it be true, that a wiſe man like a good refiner can gather gold out of the droſſieſt volume, and that a fool will be a fool with the

beſt book, yea or without book, there is no reaſon that we ſhould deprive a wiſe man of any advantage to his wiſdome, while we ſeek to reſtrain from a fool, that which being reſtrain'd will be no hindrance to his folly. For if there ſhould be ſo much exactneſſe always us'd to keep that from him which is unfit for his reading, we ſhould in the judgement of *Ariſtotle* not only, but of *Salomon*, and of our Saviour, not voutſafe him good precepts, and by conſequence not willingly admit him to good books; as being certain that a wiſe man will make better uſe of an idle pamphlet, then a fool will do of ſacred Scripture. 'Tis next alleg'd we muſt not expoſe our ſelves to temptations without neceſſity, and next to that, not imploy our time in vain things. To both theſe objections one anſwer will ſerve, out of the grounds already laid, that to all men ſuch books are not temptations, nor vanities; but uſefull drugs and materialls wherewith to temper and compoſe effective and ſtrong med'cins, which mans life cannot want. The reſt, as children and childiſh men, who have not the art to qualifie and prepare theſe working mineralls, well may be exhorted to forbear, but hinder'd forcibly they cannot be by all the licencing that Sainted Inquiſition could ever yet contrive; which is what I promis'd to deliver next, That this order of licencing conduces nothing to the end for which it was fram'd; and hath almoſt prevented me by being clear already while thus much hath bin explaining. See the ingenuity of Truth, who when ſhe gets a free and willing hand, opens her ſelf faſter, then the pace of method and diſcours can overtake her. It was the task which I began with, To ſhew that no Nation, or well inſtituted State, if they valu'd books at all, did ever uſe this way of licencing; and it might be anſwer'd, that this is a piece of prudence lately diſcover'd. To which I return, that as it was a thing ſlight and obvious to think on, ſo if it had bin difficult to finde out, there wanted not among them long ſince, who ſuggeſted ſuch a cours; which they not following, leave us a pattern of their judgement, that it was not the not knowing, but the not approving, which was the cauſe of their not uſing it. *Plato*, a man of high autority indeed, but leaſt of all for his Commonwealth, in the book of his laws, which no City ever yet receiv'd, fed his fancie with making many edicts to his ayrie Burgomaſters, which they who otherwiſe admire him, wiſh had bin rather buried and excus'd in the *genial* cups of an *Academick* night-ſitting. By which laws he ſeems to tolerat no kind of learning, but by unalterable decree, conſiſting

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

sisting most of practicall traditions, to the attainment whereof a Library of smaller bulk then his own dialogues would be abundant. And there also enacts that no Poet should so much as read to any privat man, what he had writt'n, untill the Judges and Law-keepers had seen it, and allow'd it: But that *Plato* meant this Law peculiarly to that Commonwealth which he had imagin'd, and to no other, is evident. Why was he not else a Law-giver to himself, but a transgressor, and to be expell'd by his own Magistrats; both for the wanton epigrams and dialogues which he made, and his perpetuall reading of *Sophron Mimus*, and *Aristophanes*, books of grossest infamy, and also for commending the latter of them though he were the malicious libeller of his chief friends, to be read by the Tyrant *Dionysius*, who had little need of such trash to spend his time on? But that he knew this licencing of Poems had reference and dependence to many other proviso's there set down in his fancied republic, which in this world could have no place: and so neither he himself, nor any Magistrat, or City ever imitated that cours, which tak'n apart from those other collaterall injunctions must needs be vain and fruitless. For if they fell upon one kind of strictnesse, unlesse their care were equall to regulat all other things of like aptnes to corrupt the mind, that single endeavour they knew would be but a fond labour; to shut and fortifie one gate against corruption, and be necessitated to leave others round about wide open. If we think to regulat Printing, thereby to rectifie manners, we must regulat all recreations and pastimes, all that is delightfull to man. No musick must be heard, no song be set or sung, but what is grave and *Dorick*. There must be licencing dancers, that no gesture, motion, or deportment be taught our youth but what by their allowance shall be thought honest; for such *Plato* was provided of; It will ask more then the work of twenty licencers to examin all the lutes, the violins, and the ghittarrs in every house; they must not be suffer'd to prattle as they doe, but must be licenc'd what they may say. And who shall silence all the airs and madrigalls, that whisper softnes in chambers? The Windows also, and the *Balcone's* must be thought on, there are shrewd books, with dangerous Frontispices set to sale; who shall prohibit them, shall twenty licencers? The villages also must have their visitors to enquire what lectures the bagpipe and the rebbeck reads ev'n to the ballatry, and the gammuth of every *municipal* fidler, for these are the Countrymans *Arcadia's* and his *Monte Mayors*. Next, what more Nationall corruption, for which England hears ill abroad, then houshold gluttony; who

who shall be the rectors of our daily rioting? and what shall be done to inhibit the multitudes that frequent those houses where drunk'nes is sold and harbour'd? Our garments also should be referr'd to the licencing of some more sober work-masters to see them cut into a lesse wanton garb. Who shall regulat all the mixt conversation of our youth, male and female together, as is the fashion of this Country, who shall still appoint what shall be discours'd, what presum'd, and no furder? Lastly, who shall forbid and separat all idle resort, all evill company? These things will be, and must be; but how they shall be lest hurtfull, how lest enticing, herein consists the grave and governing wisdom of a State. To sequester out of the world into *Atlantick* and *Eutopian* polities, which never can be drawn into use, will not mend our condition; but to ordain wisely as in this world of evill, in the midd'st whereof God hath plac't us unavoidably. Nor is it *Plato's* licencing of books will doe this, which necessarily pulls along with it so many other kinds of licencing, as will make us all both ridiculous and weary, and yet frustrat; but those unwritt'n, or at least unconstraining laws of vertuous education, religious and civill nurture, which *Plato* there mentions, as the bonds and ligaments of the Commonwealth, the pillars and the sustainers of every writt'n Statute; these they be which will bear chief sway in such matters as these, when all licencing will be easily eluded. Impunity and remissenes, for certain are the bane of a Commonwealth, but here the great art lyes to discern in what the law is to bid restraint and punishment, and in what things perswasion only is to work. If every action which is good, or evill in man at ripe years, were to be under pittance, and prescription, and compulsion, what were vertue but a name, what praise could be then due to well-doing, what grammercy to be sober, just or continent? many there be that complain of divin Providence for suffering *Adam* to transgresse, foolish tongues! when God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had bin else a meer artificiall *Adam*, such an *Adam* as he is in the motions. We our selves esteem not of that obedience, or love, or gift, which is of force: God therefore left him free, set before him a provoking object, ever almost in his eyes herein consisted his merit, herein the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence. Wherefore did he creat passions within us, pleasures round about us, but that these rightly temper'd are the very ingredients of vertu? They are not skilfull considerers of human things, who

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

imagin to remove ſin by removing the matter of ſin; for, beſides that it is a huge heap increaſing under the very act of diminiſhing, though ſome part of it may for a time be withdrawn from ſome perſons, it cannot from all, in ſuch a univerſall thing as books are; and when this is done, yet the ſin remains entire. Though ye take from a covetous man all his treaſure, he has yet one jewell left, ye cannot bereave him of his covetouſneſſe. Baniſh all objects of luſt, ſhut up all youth into the ſevereſt diſcipline that can be exercis'd in any hermitage, ye cannot make them chaſte, that came not thither ſo: ſuch great care and wiſdom is requir'd to the right managing of this point. Suppoſe we could expell ſin by this means; look how much we thus expell of ſin, ſo much we expell of vertue: for the matter of them both is the ſame; remove that, and ye remove them both alike. This juſtifies the high providence of God, who though he command us temperance, juſtice, continence, yet powrs out before us ev'n to a profuſenes all deſirable things, and gives us minds that can wander beyond all limit and ſatiety. Why ſhould we then affect a rigor contrary to the manner of God and of nature, by abridging or ſcanting thoſe means, which books freely permitted are, both to the triall of vertue, and the exerciſe of truth. It would be better done to learn that the law muſt needs be frivolous which goes to reſtrain things, uncertainly and yet equally working to good, and to evill. And were I the chooſer, a dram of well-doing ſhould be preferr'd before many times as much the forcible hindrance of evill-doing. For God ſure eſteems the growth and compleating of one vertuous perſon, more then the reſtraint of ten vitious. And albeit what ever thing we hear or ſee, ſitting, walking, travelling, or converſing may be fitly call'd our book, and is of the ſame effect that writings are, yet grant the thing to be prohibited were only books, it appears that this order hitherto is far inſufficient to the end which it intends. Do we not ſee, not once or oftner, but weekly that continu'd Court-libell againſt the Parlament and City, Printed, as the wet ſheets can witnes, and diſpers't among us, for all that licencing can doe? yet this is the prime ſervice a man would think, wherein this order ſhould give proof of it ſelf. If it were executed, you'l ſay. But certain, if execution be remiſſe or blindfold now, and in this particular, what will it be hereafter, and in other books. If then the order ſhall not be vain and fruſtrat, behold a new labour, Lords and Commons, ye muſt repeal and proſcribe all ſcandalous and unlicenc't books already printed and divulg'd; after ye have drawn

drawn them up into a liſt, that all may know which are condemn'd, and which not; and ordain that no forrein books be deliver'd out of cuſtody, till they have bin read over. This office will require the whole time of not a few overſeers, and thoſe no vulgar men. There be alſo books which are partly uſefull and excellent, partly culpable and pernicious; this work will ask as many more officials, to make expurgations, and expunctions, that the Commonwealth of learning be not damnify'd. In fine, when the multitude of books encreaſe upon their hands, ye muſt be fain to catalogue all thoſe Printers who are found frequently offending, and forbidd the importation of their whole ſuſpected *typography*. In a word, that this your order may be exact, and not deficient, ye muſt reform it perfectly according to the model of *Trent* and *Sevil*, which I know ye abhorre to doe. Yet though ye ſhould condiſcend to this, which God forbid, the order ſtill would be but fruitleſſe and defective to that end whereto ye meant it. If to prevent ſects and ſchiſms, who is ſo unread or ſo uncatechis'd in ſtory, that hath not heard of many ſects refuſing books as a hindrance, and preſerving their doctrine unmixt for many ages, only by unwritt'n traditions. The Chriſtian faith, for that was once a ſchiſm, is not unknown to have ſpread all over *Aſia*, ere any Goſpel or Epiſtle was ſeen in writing. If the amendment of manners be aym'd at, look into Italy and Spain, whether thoſe places be one ſcruple the better, the honeſter, the wiſer, the chaſter, ſince all the inquiſitionall rigor that hath bin executed upon books.

Another reaſon, whereby to make it plain that this order will miſſe the end it ſeeks, conſider by the quality which ought to be in every licencer. It cannot be deny'd but that he who is made judge to ſit upon the birth, or death of books whether they may be wafted into this world, or not, had need to be a man above the common meaſure, both ſtudious, learned, and judicious; there may be elſe no mean miſtakes in the cenſure of what is paſſable or not; which is alſo no mean injury. If he be of ſuch worth as behoovs him, there cannot be a more tedious and unpleaſing journey-work, a greater loſſe of time levied upon his head, then to be made the perpetuall reader of unchoſen books and pamphlets, oftimes huge volumes. There is no book that is acceptable unleſſe at certain ſeaſons; but to be enjoyn'd the reading of that at all times, and in a hand ſcars legible, whereof three pages would not down at any time in the faireſt Print, is an impoſition which I cannot beleeve how he that values time, and his own

 ſtudies

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

ſtudies, or is but of a ſenſible noſtrill ſhould be able to endure. In this one thing I crave leave of the preſent licencers to be pardon'd for ſo thinking: who doubleſſe took this office up, looking on it through their obedience to the Parlament, whoſe command perhaps made all things ſeem eaſie and unlaborious to them; but that this ſhort triall hath wearied them out already, their own expreſſions and excuſes to them who make ſo many journeys to ſollicit their licence, are teſtimony anough. Seeing therefore thoſe who now poſſeſſe the imployment, by all evident ſigns wiſh themſelves well ridd of it, aud that no man of worth, none that is not a plain unthrift of his own houts is ever likely to ſucceed them, except he mean to put himſelf to the ſalary of a Preſſe-corrector, we may eaſily foreſee what kind of licencers we are to expect hereafter, either ignorant, imperious, and remiſſe, or baſely pecuniary. This is what I had to ſhew wherein this order cannot conduce to that end, whereof it bears the intention.

I laſtly proceed from the no good it can do, to the manifeſt hurt it cauſes, in being firſt the greateſt diſcouragement and affront, that can be offer'd to learning and to learned men. It was the complaint and lamentation of Prelats, upon every leaſt breath of a motion to remove pluralities, and diſtribute more equally Church revennu's, that then all learning would be for ever daſht and diſcourag'd. But as for that opinion, I never found cauſe to think that the tenth part of learning ſtood or fell with the Clergy: nor could I ever but hold it for a ſordid and unworthy ſpeech of any Churchman who had a competency left him. If therefore ye be loath to diſhearten utterly and diſcontent, not the mercenary crew of falſe pretenders to learning, but the free and ingenuous ſort of ſuch as evidently were born to ſtudy, and love lerning for it ſelf, not for lucre, or any other end, but the ſervice of God and of truth, and perhaps that laſting fame and perpetuity of praiſe which God and good men have conſented ſhall be the reward of thoſe whoſe publiſht labours advance the good of mankind, then know, that ſo far to diſtruſt the judgement & the honeſty of one who hath but a common repute in learning, and never yet offended, as not to count him fit to print his mind without a tutor and examiner, leſt he ſhould drop a ſciſm, or ſomething of corruption, is the greateſt diſpleaſure and indignity to a free and knowing ſpirit that can be put upon him. What advantage is it to be a man over it is to be a boy at ſchool, if we have only ſcapt the ferular, to come under the feſcu of an *Imprimatur*? if ſerious and elaborat writings, as if they were no more

more then the theam of a Grammar lad under his Pedagogue muſt not be utter'd without the curſory eyes of a temporizing and extemporizing licencer. He who is not truſted with his own actions, his drift not being known to be evill, and ſtanding to the hazard of law and penalty, has no great argument to think himſelf reputed in the Commonwealth wherin he was born, for other then a fool or a foreiner. When a man writes to the world, he ſummons up all his reaſon and deliberation to aſſiſt him; he ſearches, meditats, is induſtrious, and likely conſults and conferrs with his judicious friends; after all which done he takes himſelf to be inform'd in what he writes, as well as any that writ before him; if in this the moſt conſummat act of his fidelity and ripeneſſe, no years, no induſtry, no former proof of his abilities can bring him to that ſtate of maturity, as not to be ſtill miſtruſted and ſuſpected, unleſſe he carry all his conſiderat diligence, all his midnight watchings, and expence of *Palladian* oyl, to the haſty view of an unleaſur'd licencer, perhaps much his younger, perhaps far his inferiour in judgement, perhaps one who never knew the labour of book-writing, and if he be not repulſt, or ſlighted, muſt appear in Print like a punie with his guardian, and his cenſors hand on the back of his title to be his bayl and ſurety, that he is no idiot, or ſeducer, it cannot be but a diſhonor and derogation to the author, to the book, to the priviledge and dignity of Learning. And what if the author ſhall be one ſo copious of fancie, as to have many things well worth the adding, come into his mind after licencing, while the book is yet under the Preſſe, which not ſeldom happ'ns to the beſt and diligenteſt writers; and that perhaps a dozen times in one book. The Printer dares not go beyond his licenc't copy; ſo often then muſt the author trudge to his leav-giver, that thoſe his new inſertions may be viewd; and many a jaunt will be made, ere that licencer, for it muſt be the ſame man, can either be found, or found at leiſure; mean while either the Preſſe muſt ſtand ſtill, which is no ſmall damage, or the author looſe his accurateſt thoughts, & ſend the book forth wors then he had made it, which to a diligent writer is the greateſt melancholy and vexation that can befall. And how can a man teach with autority, which is the life of teaching, how can he be a Doctor in his book as he ought to be, or elſe had better be ſilent, whenas all he teaches, all he delivers, is but under the tuition, under the correction of his patriarchal licencer to blot or alter what preciſely accords not with the hidebound humor which he calls his judgement. When every acute

cute reader upon the first sight of a pedantick licence, will be ready with these like words to ding the book a coits distance from him, I hate a pupil teacher, I endure not an instructer that comes to me under the wardship of an overseeing fist. I know nothing of the licencer, but that I have his own hand here for his arrogance; who shall warrant me his judgement? The State Sir, replies the Stationer, but has a quick return, The State shall be my governours, but not my criticks; they may be mistak'n in the choice of a licencer, as easily as this licencer may be mistak'n in an author: This is some common stuffe; and he might adde from Sir *Francis Bacon*, That *such authoriz'd books are but the language of the times*. For though a licencer should happ'n to be judicious more then ordnary, which will be a great jeopardy of the next succession, yet his very office, and his commission enjoyns him to let passe nothing but what is vulgarly receiv'd already. Nay, which is more lamentable, if the work of any deceased author, though never so famous in his life time, and even to this day, come to their hands for licence to be Printed, or Reprinted, if there be found in his book one sentence of a ventrous edge, utter'd in the height of zeal, and who knows whether it might not be the dictat of a divine Spirit, yet not suiting with every low decrepit humor of their own, though it were *Knox* himself, the Reformer of a Kingdom that spake it, they will not pardon him their dash: the sense of that great man shall to all posterity be lost, for the fearfulnesse, or the presumptuous rashnesse of a perfunctory licencer. And to what an author this violence hath bin lately done, and in what book of greatest consequence to be faithfully publisht, I could now instance, but shall forbear till a more convenient season. Yet if these things be not resented seriously and timely by them who have the remedy in their power, but that such iron moulds as these shall have autority to knaw out the choisest periods of exquisitest books, and to commit such a treacherous fraud against the orphan remainders of worthiest men after death, the more sorrow will belong to that haples race of men, whose misfortune it is to have understanding. Henceforth let no man care to learn, or care to be more then worldly wise; for certainly in higher matters to be ignorant and slothfull, to be a common stedfast dunce will be the only pleasant life, and only in request.

And as it is a particular disesteem of every knowing person alive, and most injurious to the writt'n labours and monuments of the dead, so to me it seems an undervaluing and vilifying of the whole Nation. I can-

cannot set so light by all the invention, the art, the wit, the grave and solid judgement which is in England, as that it can be comprehended in any twenty capacities how good soever, much lesse that it should not passe except their superintendence be over it, except it be sifted and strain'd with their strainers, that it should be uncurrant without their manuall stamp. Truth and understanding are not such wares as to be monopoliz'd and traded in by tickets and statutes, and standards. We must not think to make a staple commodity of all the knowledge in the Land, to mark and licence it like our broad cloath, and our wooll packs. What is it but a servitude like that impos'd by the Philistims, not to be allow'd the sharpning of our own axes and coulters, but we must repair from all quarters to twenty licencing forges. Had any one writt'n and divulg'd erroneous things & scandalous to honest life, misusing and forfeiting the esteem had of his reason among men, if after conviction this only censure were adjudg'd him, that he should never henceforth write, but what were first examin'd by an appointed officer, whose hand should be annext to passe his credit for him, that now he might be safely read, it could not be apprehended lesse then a disgracefull punishment. Whence to include the whole Nation, and those that never yet thus offended, under such a diffident and suspectfull prohibition, may plainly be understood what a disparagement it is. So much the more, when as dettors and delinquents may walk abroad without a keeper, but unoffensive books must not stirre forth without a visible jaylor in thir title. Nor is it to the common people lesse then a reproach; for if we be so jealous over them, as that we dare not trust them with an English pamphlet, what doe we but censure them for a giddy, vitious, and ungrounded people; in such a sick and weak estate of faith and discretion, as to be able to take nothing down but through the pipe of a licencer. That this is care or love of them, we cannot pretend, whenas in those Popish places where the Laity are most hated and dispis'd the same strictnes is us'd over them. Wisdom we cannot call it, because it stops but one breach of licence, nor that neither; whenas those corruptions which it seeks to prevent, break in faster at other dores which cannot be shut.

And in conclusion it reflects to the disrepute of our Ministers also, of whose labours we should hope better, and of the proficiencie which thir flock reaps by them, then that after all this light of the Gospel which is, and is to be, and all this continuall preaching, they

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

ſhould be ſtill frequented with ſuch an unprincipl'd, unedify'd, and laick rabble, as that the whiffe of every new pamphlet ſhould ſtagger them out of thir catechiſm, and Chriſtian walking. This may have much reaſon to diſcourage the Miniſters when ſuch a low conceit is had of all their exhortations, and the benefiting of their hearers, as that they are not thought fit to be turn'd looſe to three ſheets of paper without a licencer, that all the Sermons, all the Lectures preacht, printed, vented in ſuch numbers, and ſuch volumes, as have now well-nigh made all other books unſalable, ſhould not be armor anough againſt one ſingle *enchiridion*, without the caſtle St. *Angelo* of an *Imprimatur*.

And leſt ſom ſhould perſwade ye, Lords and Commons, that theſe arguments of lerned mens diſcouragement at this your order, are meer flouriſhes, and not reall, I could recount what I have ſeen and heard in other Countries, where this kind of inquiſition tyrannizes; when I have ſat among their lerned men, for that honor I had, and bin counted happy to be born in ſuch a place of *Philoſophic* freedom, as they ſuppos'd England was, while themſelvs did nothing but bemoan the ſervil condition into which lerning amongſt them was brought; that this was it which had dampt the glory of Italian wits; that nothing had bin there writt'n now theſe many years but flattery and fuſtian. There it was that I found and viſited the famous *Galileo* grown old, a priſner to the Inquiſition, for thinking in Aſtronomy otherwiſe then the Franciſcan and Dominican licencers thought. And though I knew that England then was groaning loudeſt under the Prelaticall yoak, nevertheleſſe I took it as a pledge of future happines, that other Nations were ſo perſwaded of her liberty. Yet was it beyond my hope that thoſe Worthies were then breathing in her air, who ſhould be her leaders to ſuch a deliverance, as ſhall never be forgott'n by any revolution of time that this world hath to finiſh. When that was once begun, it was as little in my fear, that what words of complaint I heard among lerned men of other parts utter'd againſt the Inquiſition, the ſame I ſhou'd hear by as lerned men at home utterd in time of Parlament againſt an order of licencing; and that ſo generally, that when I had diſclos'd my ſelf a companion of their diſcontent, I might ſay, if without envy, that he whom an honeſt *quæſtorſhip* had indear'd to the *Sicilians*, was not more by them importun'd againſt *Verres*, then the favourable opinion which I had among many who honour ye, and are known and reſpected by ye, loa-

loaded me with entreaties and perſwaſions, that I would not deſpair to lay together that which juſt reaſon ſhould bring into my mind, toward the removal of an undeſerved thraldom upon lerning. That this is not therefore the disburdning of a particular fancie, but the common grievance of all thoſe who had prepar'd their minds and ſtudies above the vulgar pitch to advance truth in others, and from others to entertain it, thus much may ſatisfie. And in their name I ſhall for neither friend nor foe conceal what the generall murmur is; that if it come to inquiſitioning again, and licencing, and that we are ſo timorous of our ſelvs, and ſo ſuſpicious of all men, as to fear each book, and the ſhaking of every leaf, before we know what the contents are, if ſome who but of late were little better then ſilenc't from preaching, ſhall come now to ſilence us from reading, except what they pleaſe, it cannot be gueſt what is intended by ſom but a ſecond tyranny over learning: and will ſoon put it out of controverſie that Biſhops and Presbyters are the ſame to us both name and thing. That thoſe evills of Prelaty which before from five or ſix and twenty Sees were diſtributivly charg'd upon the whole people, will now light wholly upon learning, is not obſcure to us: whenas now the Paſtor of a ſmall unlearned Pariſh, on the ſudden ſhall be exalted Archbiſhop over a large dioces of books, and yet not remove, but keep his other cure too, a myſticall pluraliſt. He who but of late cry'd down the ſole ordination of every novice Batchelor of Art, and deny'd ſole juriſdiction over the ſimpleſt Pariſhioner, ſhall now at home in his privat chair aſſume both theſe over worthieſt and excellenteſt books and ableſt authors that write them. This is not, Yee Covnants and Proteſtations that we have made, this is not to put down Prelaty, this is but to chop an Epiſcopacy, this is but to tranſlate the Palace *Metropolitan* from one kind of dominion into another, this is but an old canonicall ſlight of *commuting* our penance. To ſtartle thus betimes at a meer unlicenc't pamphlet will after a while be afraid of every conventicle, and a while after will make a conventicle of every Chriſtian meeting. But I am certain that a State govern'd by the rules of juſtice and fortitude, or a Church built and founded upon the rock of faith and true knowledge, cannot be ſo puſillanimous. While things are yet not conſtituted in Religion, that freedom of writing ſhould be reſtrain'd by a diſcipline imitated from the Prelats, and learnt by them from the Inquiſition to ſhut us up all again into the breſt of a licencer, muſt needs give cauſe of doub- and

 diſcou-

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

discouragement to all learned and religious men. Who cannot but discern the finenes of this politic drift, and who are the contrivers; that while Bishops were to be baited down, then all Presses might be open; it was the peoples birthright and priviledge in time of Parlament, it was the breaking forth of light. But now the Bishops abrogated and voided out of the Church, as if our Reformation sought no more, but to make room for others into their seats under another name, the Episcopall arts begin to bud again, the cruse of truth must run no more oyle, liberty of Printing must be enthrall'd again under a Prelaticall commission of twenty, the privilege of the people nullify'd, and which is wors, the freedom of learning must groan again, and to her old fetters; all this the Parlament yet sitting. Although their own late arguments and defences against the Prelats might remember them that this obstructing violence meets for the most part with an event utterly opposite to the end which it drives at: instead of suppressing sects and schisms, it raises them and invests them with a reputation: *The punishing of wits enhaunces their authority*, saith the Vicount St. *Albans, and a forbidd'n writing is thought to be a certain spark of truth that flies up in the faces of them who seeke to tread it out.* This order therefore may prove a nursing mother to sects, but I shall easily shew how it will be a step-dame to Truth: and first by disinabling us to the maintenance of what is known already.

Well knows he who uses to consider, that our faith and knowledge thrives by exercise, as well as our limbs and complexion. Truth is compar'd in Scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetuall progression, they sick'n into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. A man may be a heretick in the truth; and if he beleeve things only because his Pastor sayes so, or the Assembly so determins, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds, becomes his heresie. There is not any burden that som would gladlier post off to another, then the charge and care of their Religion. There be, who knows not that there be of Protestants and professors who live and dye in as arrant an implicit faith, as any lay Papist of Loretto. A wealthy man addicted to his pleasure and to his profits, finds Religion to be a traffick so entangl'd, and of so many piddling accounts, that of all mysteries he cannot skill to keep a stock going upon that trade. What should he doe? fain he would have the name to be religious, fain he would bear up with his neighbours in that. What does he therefore, but resolvs to give over toyling

ling, and to find himself out som factor, to whose care and credit he may commit the whole managing of his religious affairs; som Divine of note and estimation that must be. To him he adheres, resigns the whole ware-house of his religion, with all the locks and keyes into his custody; and indeed makes the very person of that man his religion; esteems his associating with him a sufficient evidence and commendatory of his own piety. So that a man may say his religion is now no more within himself, but is becom a dividuall movable, and goes and comes neer him, according as that good man frequents the house. He entertains him, gives him gifts, feasts him, lodges him; his religion comes home at night, praies, is liberally supt, and sumptuously laid to sleep, rises, is saluted, and after the malmsey, or some well spic't bruage, and better breakfasted then he whose morning appetite would have gladly fed on green figs between *Bethany* and *Jerusalem*, his Religion walks abroad at eight, and leavs his kind entertainer in the shop trading all day without his religion.

Another sort there be who when they hear that all things shall be order'd, all things regulated and setl'd; nothing writt'n but what passes through the custom-house of certain Publicans that have the tunaging and the poundaging of all free spok'n truth, will strait give themselvs up into your hands, mak'em & cut'em out what religion ye please; there be delights, there be recreations and jolly pastimes that will fetch the day about from sun to sun, and rock the tedious year as in a delightfull dream. What need they torture their heads with that which others have tak'n so strictly, and so unalterably into their own pourveying. These are the fruits which a dull ease and cessation of our knowledge will bring forth among the people. How goodly, and how to be wisht were such an obedient unanimity as this, what a fine conformity would it starch us all into? doubtles a stanch and solid peece of frame-work, as any January could freeze together.

Nor much better will be the consequence ev'n among the Clergy themselvs; it is no new thing never heard of before, for a *parochiall* Minister, who has his reward, and is at his *Hercules* pillars in a warm benefice, to be easily inclinable, if he have nothing else that may rouse up his studies, to finish his circuit in an English concordance and a *topic folio*, the gatherings and savings of a sober graduatship, a *Harmony* and a *Catena*, treading the constant round of certain common doctrinall heads, attended with their uses, motives, marks and means,

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

means, out of which as out of an alphabet or fol fa by forming and transforming, joyning and dis-joyning variously a little book-craft, and two hours meditation might furnish him unspeakably to the performance of more then a weekly charge of sermoning: not to reck'n up the infinit helps of interlinearies, breviaries, *synopses*, and other loitering gear. But as for the multitude of Sermons ready printed and pil'd up, on every text that is not difficult, our London trading St. *Thomas* in his vestry, and adde to boot St. *Martin*, and St. *Hugh*, have not within their hallow'd limits more vendible ware of all sorts ready made: so that penury he never need fear of Pulpit provision, having where so plenteously to refresh his magazin. But if his rear and flanks be not impal'd, if his back dore be not secur'd by the rigid licencer, but that a bold book may now and then issue forth, and give the assault to some of his old collections in their trenches, it will concern him then to keep waking, to stand in watch, to set good guards and sentinells about his receiv'd opinions, to walk the round and counter-round with his fellow inspectors, fearing lest any of his flock be seduc't, who also then would be better instructed, better exercis'd and disciplin'd. And God send that the fear of this diligence which must then be us'd, doe not make us affect the lazines of a licencing Church.

For if we be sure we are in the right, and doe not hold the truth guiltily, which becomes not, if we our selves condemn not our own weak and frivolous teaching, and the people for an untaught and irreligious gadding rout, what can be more fair, then when a man judicious, learned, and of a conscience, for ought we know, as good as theirs that taught us what we know, shall not privily from house to house, which is more dangerous, but openly by writing publish to the world what his opinion is, what his reasons, and wherefore that which is now thought cannot be sound. Christ urg'd it as wherewith to justifie himself, that he preacht in publick; yet writing is more publick then preaching; and more easie to refutation, if need be, there being so many whose businesse and profession meerly it is, to be the champions of Truth; which if they neglect, what can be imputed but their sloth, or unability?

Thus much we are hinder'd and dis-inur'd by this cours of licencing toward the true knowledge of what we seem to know. For how much it hurts and hinders the licencers themselves in the calling of their Ministery, more then any secular employment, if they will dis-

discharge that office as they ought, so that of necessity they must neglect either the one duty or the other, I insist not, because it is a particular, but leave it to their own conscience, how they will decide it there.

There is yet behind of what I purpos'd to lay open, the incredible losse, and detriment that this plot of licencing puts us to, more then if som enemy at sea should stop up all our hav'ns and ports, and creeks, it hinders and retards the importation of our richest Marchandize, Truth: nay it was first establisht and put in practice by Antichristian malice and mystery on set purpose to extinguish, if it were possible, the light of Reformation, and to settle falshood; little differing from that policie wherewith the Turk upholds his *Alcoran*, by the prohibition of Printing. 'Tis not deny'd, but gladly confest, we are to send our thanks and vows to heav'n, louder then most of Nations, for that great measure of truth which we enjoy, especially in those main points between us and the Pope, with his appertinences the Prelats: but he who thinks we are to pitch our tent here, and have attain'd the utmost prospect of reformation, that the mortall glasse wherein we contemplate, can shew us, till we come to *beatific* vision, that man by this very opinion declares, that he is yet farre short of Truth.

Truth indeed came once into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on: but when he ascended, and his Apostles after him were laid asleep, then strait arose a wicked race of deceivers, who as that story goes of the *Ægyptian Typhon* with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good *Osiris*, took the virgin Truth, hewd her lovely form into a thousand peeces, and scatter'd them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the carefull search that *Isis* made for the mangl'd body of *Osiris*, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall doe, till her Masters second comming; he shall bring together every joynt and member, and shall mould them into an immortall feature of lovelines and perfection. Suffer not these licencing prohibitions to stand at every place of opportunity forbidding and disturbing them that continue seeking, that continue to do our obsequies to the torn body of our martyr'd Saint. We boast our light; but if we look not wisely on the Sun it self, it smites us into darknes. Who can discern those pla-

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

planets that are oft *Combuſt*, and thoſe ſtars of brighteſt magnitude that riſe and ſet with the Sun, untill the oppoſite motion of their orbs bring them to ſuch a place in the firmament, where they may be ſeen evning or morning. The light which we have gain'd, was giv'n us, not to be ever ſtaring on, but by it to diſcover onward things more remote from our knowledge. It is not the unfrocking of a Prieſt, the unmitring of a Biſhop, and the removing him from off the *Presbyterian* ſhoulders that will make us a happy Nation, no, if other things as great in the Church, and in the rule of life both economicall and politicall be not lookt into and reform'd, we have lookt ſo long upon the blaze that *Zuinglius* and *Calvin* hath beacon'd up to us, that we are ſtark blind. There be who perpetually complain of ſchiſms and ſects, and make it ſuch a calamity that any man diſſents from their maxims. 'Tis their own pride and ignorance which cauſes the diſturbing, who neither will hear with meeknes, nor can convince, yet all muſt be ſuppreſt which is not found in their *Syntagma*. They are the troublers, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect and permit not others to unite thoſe diſſever'd peeces which are yet wanting to the body of Truth. To be ſtill ſearching what we know not, by what we know, ſtill cloſing up truth to truth as we find it (for all her body is *homogeneal*, and proportionall) this is the golden rule in *Theology* as well as in Arithmetick, and makes up the beſt harmony in a Church; not the forc't and outward union of cold, and neutrall, and inwardly divided minds.

Lords and Commons of England, conſider what Nation it is wherof ye are, and wherof ye are the governours: a Nation not ſlow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious, and piercing ſpirit, acute to invent, ſuttle and ſinewy to diſcours, not beneath the reach of any point the higheſt that human capacity can ſoar to. Therefore the ſtudies of learning in her deepeſt Sciences have bin ſo ancient, and ſo eminent among us, that Writers of good antiquity, and ableſt judgement have bin perſwaded that ev'n the ſchool of *Pythagoras*, and the *Perſian* wiſdom took beginning from the old Philoſophy of this Iland. And that wiſe and civill Roman, *Julius Agricola*, who govern'd once here for *Cæſar*, preferr'd the naturall wits of Britain, before the labour'd ſtudies of the French. Nor is it for nothing that the grave and frugal *Tranſilvanian* ſends out yearly from as farre as the mountanous borders of *Ruſſia*, and beyond the *Hercynian* wildernes, not their youth, but their ſtay'd men, to learn our language, and our *theologic* arts.

arts. Yet that which is above all this, the favour and the love of heav'n we have great argument to think in a peculiar manner propitious and propending towards us. Why elſe was this Nation chos'n before any other, that out of her as out of *Sion* ſhould be proclam'd and ſounded forth the firſt tidings and trumpet of Reformation to all *Europ*. And had it not bin the obſtinat perverſnes of our Prelats againſt the divine and admirable ſpirit of *Wickleff*, to ſuppreſſe him as a ſchiſmatic and *innovator*, perhaps neither the *Bohemian Huſſe* and *Jerom*, no nor the name of *Luther*, or of *Calvin* had bin ever known: the glory of reforming all our neighbours had bin compleatly ours. But now, as our obdurat Clergy have with violence demean'd the matter, we are become hitherto the lateſt and the backwardeſt Schollers, of whom God offer'd to have made us the teachers. Now once again by all concurrence of ſigns, and by the generall inſtinct of holy and devout men, as they daily and ſolemnly expreſſe their thoughts, God is decreeing to begin ſome new and great period in his Church, ev'n to the reforming of Reformation it ſelf: what does he then but reveal Himſelf to his ſervants, and as his manner is, firſt to his Engliſh-men; I ſay as his manner is, firſt to us, though we mark not the method of his counſels, and are unworthy. Behold now this vaſt City; a City of refuge, the manſion houſe of liberty, encompaſt and ſurrounded with his protection; the ſhop of warre hath not there more anvils and hammers waking, to faſhion out the plates and inſtruments of armed Juſtice in defence of beleaguer'd Truth, then there be pens and heads there, ſitting by their ſtudious lamps, muſing, ſearching, revolving new notions and idea's wherewith to preſent, as with their homage and their fealty the approaching Reformation: others as faſt reading, trying all things, aſſenting to the force of reaſon and convincement. What could a man require more from a Nation ſo pliant and ſo prone to ſeek after knowledge. What wants there to ſuch a towardly and pregnant ſoile, but wiſe and faithfull labourers, to make a knowing people, a Nation of Prophets, of Sages, and of Worthies. We reck'n more then five months yet to harveſt; there need not be five weeks, had we but eyes to lift up, the fields are white already. Where there is much deſire to learn, there of neceſſity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making. Under theſe fantaſtic terrors of

ſect

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

ſect and ſchiſm, we wrong the earneſt and zealous thirſt after knowledge and underſtanding which God hath ſtirr'd up in this City. What ſome lament of, we rather ſhould rejoyce at, ſhould rather praiſe this pious forwardnes among men, to reaſſume the ill deputed care of their Religion into their own hands again. A little generous prudence, a little forbearance of one another, and ſom grain of charity might win all theſe diligences to joyn, and unite into one generall and brotherly ſearch after Truth; could we but forgoe this Prelaticall tradition of crowding free conſciences and Chriſtian liberties into canons and precepts of men. I doubt not, if ſome great and worthy ſtranger ſhould come among us, wiſe to diſcern the mould and temper of a people, and how to govern it, obſerving the high hopes and aims, the diligent alacrity of our extended thoughts and reaſonings in the purſuance of truth and freedom, but that he would cry out as *Pirrhus* did, admiring the Roman docility and courage, if ſuch were my *Epirots*, I would not deſpair the greateſt deſign that could be attempted to make a Church or Kingdom happy. Yet theſe are the men cry'd out againſt for ſchiſmaticks and ſectaries; as if, while the Temple of the Lord was building, ſome cutting, ſome ſquaring the marble, others hewing the cedars, there ſhould be a ſort of irrationall men who could not conſider there muſt be many ſchiſms and many diſſections made in the quarry and in the timber, ere the houſe of God can be built. And when every ſtone is laid artfully together, it cannot be united into a continuity, it can but be contiguous in this world; neither can every peece of the building be of one form; nay rather the perfection conſiſts in this, that out of many moderat varieties and brotherly diſſimilitudes that are not vaſtly diſproportionall ariſes the goodly and the graceſull ſymmetry that commends the whole pile and ſtructure. Let us therefore be more conſiderat builders, more wiſe in ſpirituall architecture, when great reformation is expected. For now the time ſeems come, wherein *Moſes* the great Prophet may ſit in heav'n rejoycing to ſee that memorable and glorious wiſh of his fulfill'd, when not only our ſev'nty Elders, but all the Lords people are become Prophets. No marvell then though ſome men, and ſome good men too perhaps, but young in goodneſſe, as *Joſhua* then was, envy them. They fret, and out of their own weaknes are in agony, leſt theſe diviſions and ſubdiviſions will undoe us.

The

The adverſarie again applauds, and waits the hour, when they have brancht themſelves out, ſaith he, ſmall anough into parties and partitions, then will be our time. Fool! he ſees not the firm root, out of which we all grow, though into branches: nor will beware untill he ſee our ſmall divided maniples cutting through at every angle of his ill united and unweildy brigade. And that we are to hope better of all theſe ſuppoſed ſects and ſchiſms, and that we ſhall not need that ſolicitude honeſt perhaps though over timorous of them that vex in this behalf, but ſhall laugh in the end, at thoſe malicious applauders of our differences, I have theſe reaſons to perſwade me.

Firſt, when a City ſhall be as it were beſieg'd and blockt about, her navigable river infeſted, inrodes and incurſions round, defiance and battell oft rumor'd to be marching up ev'n to her walls, and ſuburb trenches, that then the people, or the greater part, more then at other times, wholly tak'n up with the ſtudy of higheſt and moſt important matters to be reform'd, ſhould be diſputing, reaſoning, reading, inventing, diſcourſing, ev'n to a rarity, and admiration, things not before diſcourſt or writt'n of, argues firſt a ſingular good will, contentedneſſe and confidence in your prudent foreſight, and ſafe government, Lords and Commons; and from thence derives it ſelf to a gallant bravery and well grounded contempt of their enemies, as if there were no ſmall number of as great ſpirits among us, as his was, who when Rome was nigh beſieg'd by *Hannibal*, being in the City, bought that peece of ground at no cheap rate, whereon *Hanibal* himſelf encampt his own regiment. Next it is a lively and cherfull preſage of our happy ſucceſſe and victory. For as in a body, when the blood is freſh, the ſpirits pure and vigorous, not only to vital, but to rationall faculties, and thoſe in the acuteſt, and the perteſt operations of wit and ſuttlety, it argues in what good plight and conſtitution the body is, ſo when the cherfulneſſe of the people is ſo ſprightly up, as that it has, not only wherewith to guard well its own freedom and ſafety, but to ſpare, and to beſtow upon the ſolideſt and ſublimeſt points of controverſie, and new invention, it betok'ns us not degenerated, nor drooping to a fatall decay, but caſting off the old and wrincl'd skin of corruption to outlive theſe pangs and wax young again, entring the glorious waies of Truth and proſperous vertue deſtin'd to be-

come

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

come great and honourable in theſe latter ages. Methinks I ſee in my mind a noble and puiſſant Nation rouſing herſelf like a ſtrong man after ſleep, and ſhaking her invincible locks: Methinks I ſee her as an Eagle muing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazl'd eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unſcaling her long abuſed ſight at the fountain it ſelf of heav'nly radiance; while the whole noiſe of timorous and flocking birds, with thoſe alſo that love the twilight, flutter about, amaz'd at what ſhe means, and in their envious gabble would prognoſticat a year of ſects and ſchiſms.

What ſhould ye doe then, ſhould ye ſuppreſſe all this flowry crop of knowledge and new light ſprung up and yet ſpringing daily in this City, ſhould ye ſet an *Oligarchy* of twenty ingroſſers over it, to bring a famin upon our minds again, when we ſhall know nothing but what is meaſur'd to us by their buſhel? Beleeve it, Lord and Commons, they who counſell ye to ſuch a ſuppreſſing, doe as good as bid ye ſuppreſſe your ſelves; and I will ſoon ſhew how. If it be deſir'd to know the immediat cauſe of all this free writing and free ſpeaking, there cannot be aſſign'd a truer then your own mild, and free, and human government; it is the liberty, Lords and Commons, which your own valorous and happy counſels have purchaſt us, liberty which is the nurſe of all great wits; this is that which hath rarify'd and enlightn'd our ſpirits like the influence of heav'n; this is that which hath enfranchis'd, enlarg'd and lifted up our apprehenſions degrees above themſelves. Ye cannot make us now leſſe capable, leſſe knowing, leſſe eagarly purſuing of the truth, unleſſe ye firſt make your ſelves, that made us ſo, leſſe the lovers, leſſe the founders of our true liberty. We can grow ignorant again, brutiſh, formall, and ſlaviſh, as ye found us; but you then muſt firſt become that which ye cannot be, oppreſſive, arbitrary, and tyrannous, as they were from whom ye have free'd us. That our hearts are now more capacious, our thoughts more erected to the ſearch and expectation of greateſt and exacteſt things, is the iſſue of your owne vertu propagated in us; ye cannot ſuppreſſe that unleſſe ye reinforce an abrogated and mercileſſe law, that fathers may diſpatch at will their own children. And who ſhall then ſtick cloſeſt to ye, and excite others? not he who takes up armes for cote and conduct, and his four nobles of Danegelt. Although I diſpraiſe not the defence of juſt immunities, yet love my peace

peace better, if that were all. Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conſcience, above all liberties.

What would be beſt advis'd then, if it be found ſo hurtfull and ſo unequall to ſuppreſſe opinions for the newnes, or the unſutablenes to a cuſtomary acceptance, will not be my task to ſay; I only ſhall repeat what I have learnt from one of your own honourable number, a right noble and pious Lord, who had he not ſacrific'd his life and fortunes to the Church and Commonwealth, we had not now miſt and bewayl'd a worthy and undoubted patron of this argument. Ye know him I am ſure; yet I for honours ſake, and may it be eternall to him, ſhall name him, the Lord *Brook*. He writing of Epiſcopacy, and by the way treating of ſects and ſchiſms, left Ye his vote, or rather now the laſt words of his dying charge, which I know will ever be of dear and honour'd regard with Ye, ſo full of meeknes and breathing charity, that next to his laſt teſtament, who bequeath'd love and peace to his Diſciples, I cannot call to mind where I have read or heard words more mild and peacefull. He there exhorts us to hear with patience and humility thoſe, however they be miſcall'd, that deſire to live purely, in ſuch a uſe of Gods Ordinances, as the beſt guidance of their conſcience gives them, and to tolerat them, though in ſome diſconformity to our ſelves. The book it ſelf will tell us more at large being publiſht to the world, and dedicated to the Parlament by him who both for his life and for his death deſerves, that what advice he left be not laid by without peruſall.

And now the time in ſpeciall is, by priviledge to write and ſpeak what may help to the furder diſcuſſing of matters in agitation. The Temple of *Janus* with his two *controverſal* faces might now not unſignificantly be ſet open. And though all the windes of doctrin were let looſe to play upon the earth, ſo Truth be in the field, we do injuriouſly by licencing and prohibiting to miſdoubt her ſtrength. Let her and Falſhood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the wors, in a free and open encounter. Her confuting is the beſt and ſureſt ſuppreſſing. He who hears what praying there is for light and clearer knowledge to be ſent down among us, would think of other matters to be conſtituted beyond the diſcipline of *Geneva*, fram'd and fabric't already to our hands. Yet when the new

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

new light which we beg for ſhines in upon us, there be who envy, and oppoſe, if it come not firſt in at their caſements. What a colluſion is this, whenas we are exhorted by the wiſe man to uſe diligence, *to ſeek for wiſdom as for hidd'n treaſures* early and late, that another order ſhall enjoyn us to know nothing but by ſtatute. When a man hath bin labouring the hardeſt labour in the deep mines of knowledge, hath furniſht out his findings in all their equipage, drawn forth his reaſons as it were a battell raung'd, ſcatter'd and defeated all objections in his way, calls out his adverſary into the plain, offers him the advantage of wind and ſun, if he pleaſe; only that he may try the matter by dint of argument, for his opponents then to ſculk, to lay ambuſhments, to keep a narrow bridge of licencing where the challenger ſhould paſſe, though it be valour anough in ſhouldierſhip, is but weaknes and cowardiſe in the wars of Truth. For who knows not that Truth is ſtrong next to the Almighty; ſhe needs no policies, nor ſtratagems, nor licencings to make her victorious, thoſe are the ſhifts and the defences that error uſes againſt her power: give her but room, & do not bind her when ſhe ſleeps, for then ſhe ſpeaks not true, as the old *Proteus* did, who ſpake oracles only when he was caught & bound, but then rather ſhe turns herſelf into all ſhapes, except her own, and perhaps tunes her voice according to the time, as *Micaiah* did before *Ahab*, untill ſhe be adjur'd into her own likenes. Yet is it not impoſſible that ſhe may have more ſhapes then one. What elſe is all that rank of things indifferent, wherein Truth may be on this ſide, or on the other, without being unlike her ſelf. What but a vain ſhadow elſe is the abolition of *thoſe ordinances, that hand writing nayl'd to the croſſe*, what great purchaſe is this Chriſtian liberty which *Paul* ſo often boaſts of. His doctrine is, that he who eats or eats not, regards a day, or regards it not, may doe either to the Lord. How many other things might be tolerated in peace, and left to conſcience, had we but charity, and were it not the chief ſtrong hold of our hypocriſie to be ever judging one another. I fear yet this iron yoke of outward conformity hath left a ſlaviſh print upon our necks; the ghoſt of a linnen decency yet haunts us. We ſtumble and are impatient at the leaſt dividing of one viſible congregation from another, though it be not in fundamentalls; and through our forwardnes to ſuppreſſe, and our backwardnes to recover any en-

enthrall'd peece of truth out of the gripe of cuſtom, we care not to keep truth ſeparated from truth, which is the fierceſt rent and diſunion of all. We doe not ſee that while we ſtill affect by all means a rigid externall formality, we may as ſoon fall again into a groſſe conforming ſtupidity, a ſtark and dead congealment of *wood and hay and ſtubble* forc't and frozen together, which is more to the ſudden degenerating of a Church then many *ſubdichotomies* of petty ſchiſms. Not that I can think well of every light ſeparation, or that all in a Church is to be expected *gold and ſilver and pretious ſtones*: it is not poſſible for man to ſever the wheat from the tares, the good fiſh from the other frie; that muſt be the Angels Miniſtery at the end of mortall things. Yet if all cannot be of one mind, as who looks they ſhould be? this doubtles is more wholſome, more prudent, and more Chriſtian that many be tolerated, rather then all compell'd. I mean not tolerated Popery, and open ſuperſtition, which as it extirpats all religions and civill ſupremacies, ſo it ſelf ſhould be extirpat, provided firſt that all charitable and compaſſionat means be us'd to win and regain the weak and the miſled: that alſo which is impious or evil abſolutely either againſt faith or maners no law can poſſibly permit, that intends not to unlaw it ſelf: but thoſe neighboring differences, or rather indifferences, are what I ſpeak of, whether in ſome point of doctrine or of diſcipline, which though they may be many, yet need not interrupt *the unity of Spirit*, if we could but find among us *the bond of peace*. In the mean while if any one would write, and bring his helpfull hand to the ſlow-moving Reformation which we labour under, if Truth have ſpok'n to him before others, or but ſeem'd at leaſt to ſpeak, who hath ſo bejeſuited us that we ſhould trouble that man with asking licence to doe ſo worthy a deed? and not conſider this, that if it come to prohibiting, there is not ought more likely to be prohibited then truth it ſelf; whoſe firſt appearance to our eyes bleer'd and dimm'd with prejudice and cuſtom, is more unſightly and unplauſible then many errors, ev'n as the perſon is of many a great man ſlight and contemptible to ſee to. And what doe they tell us vainly of new opinions, when this very opinion of theirs, that none muſt be heard, but whom they like, is the worſt and neweſt opinion of all others; and is the chief cauſe why ſects and ſchiſms doe ſo much abound, and true knowledge is kept at diſtance from us; beſides yet a greater danger

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

danger which is in it. For when God ſhakes a Kingdome with ſtrong and healthfull commotions to a generall reforming, 'tis not untrue that many ſectaries and falſe teachers are then buſieſt in ſeducing; but yet more true it is, that God then raiſes to his own work men of rare abilities, and more then common induſtry not only to look back and reviſe what hath bin taught heretofore, but to gain furder and goe on, ſome new enlightn'd ſteps in the diſcovery of truth. For ſuch is the order of Gods enlightning his Church, to diſpenſe and deal out by degrees his beam, ſo as our earthly eyes may beſt ſuſtain it. Neither is God appointed and confin'd, where and out of what place theſe his choſen ſhall be firſt heard to ſpeak; for he ſees not as man ſees, chooſes not as man chooſes, leſt we ſhould devote our ſelves again to ſet places, and aſſemblies, and outward callings of men; planting our faith one while in the old Convocation houſe, and another while in the Chappell at Weſtminſter; when all the faith and religion that ſhall be there canoniz'd, is not ſufficient without plain convincement, and the charity of patient inſtruction to ſupple the leaſt bruiſe of conſcience, to edifie the meaneſt Chriſtian, who deſires to walk in the Spirit, and not in the letter of human truſt, for all the number of voices that can be there made; no though *Harry* the 7. himſelf there, with all his leige tombs about him, ſhould lend them voices from the dead, to ſwell their number. And if the men be erroneous who appear to be the leading ſchiſmaticks, what witholds us but our ſloth, our ſelf-will, and diſtruſt in the right cauſe, that we doe not give them gentle meetings and gentle diſmiſſions, that we debate not and examin the matter throughly with liberall aud frequent audience; if not for their ſakes, yet for our own? ſeeing no man who hath taſted learning, but will confeſſe the many waies of profiting by thoſe who not contented with ſtale receits are able to manage, and ſet forth new poſitions to the world. And were they but as the duſt and cinders of our feet, ſo long as in that notion they may yet ſerve to poliſh and brighten the armoury of Truth, ev'n for that reſpect they were not utterly to be caſt away. But if they be of thoſe whom God hath fitted for the ſpeciall uſe of theſe times with eminent and ample gifts, and thoſe perhaps neither among the Prieſts, nor among the Phariſees, and we in the haſt of a precipitant zeal ſhall make no diſtinction, but reſolve to ſtop their mouths, becauſe we fear they come

come with new and dangerous opinions, as we commonly forejudge them ere we underſtand them, no leſſe then woe to us, while thinking thus to defend the Goſpel, we are found the perſecutors.

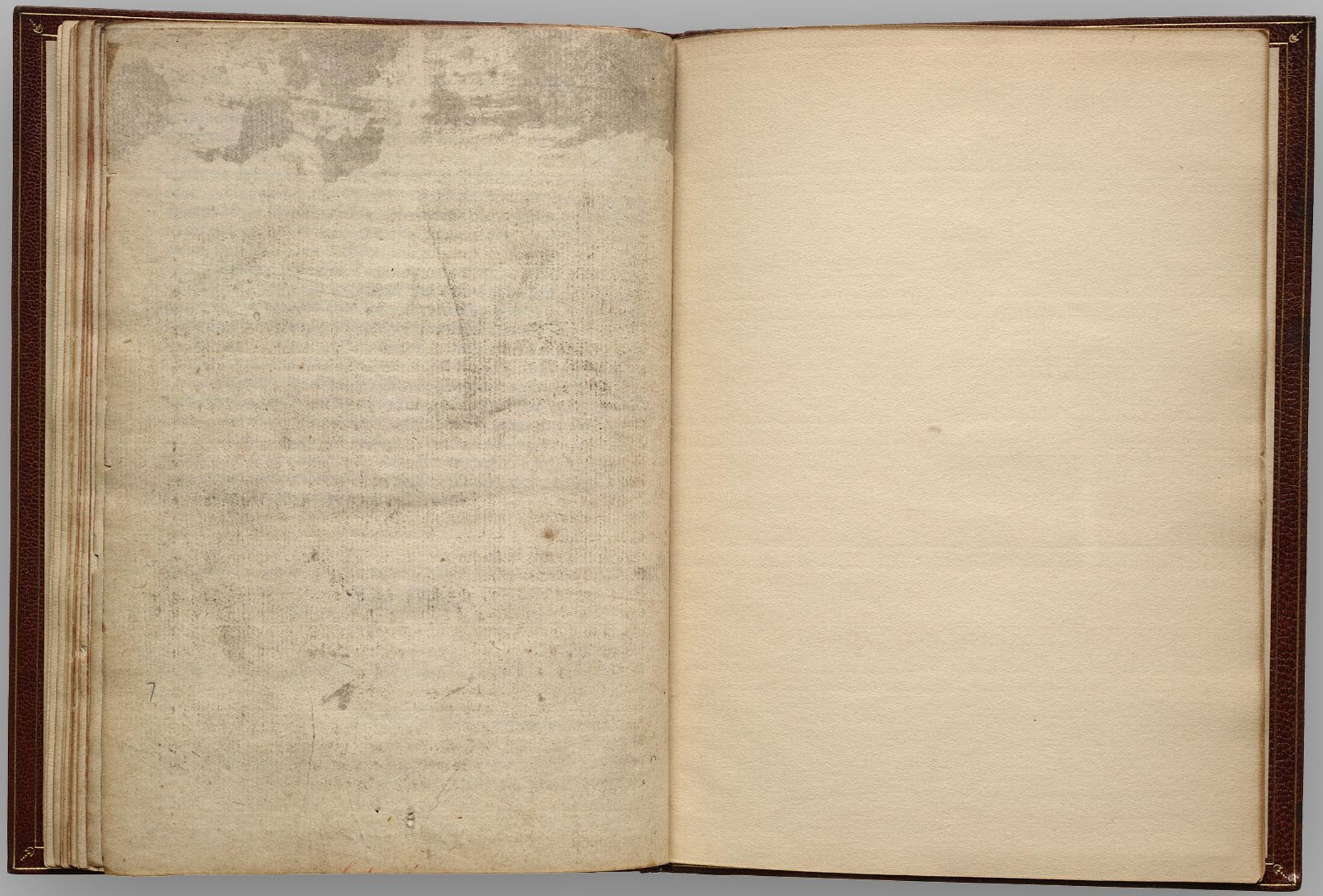
There have bin not a few ſince the beginning of this Parlament, both of the Presbytery and others who by their unlicen't books to the contempt of an *Imprimatur* firſt broke that triple ice clung about our hearts, and taught the people to ſee day: I hope that none of thoſe were the perſwaders to renew upon us this bondage which they themſelves have wrought ſo much good by contemning. But if neither the check that *Moſes* gave to young *Joſhua*, nor the countermand which our Saviour gave to young *John*, who was ſo ready to prohibit thoſe whom he thought unlicenc't, be not anough to admoniſh our Elders how unacceptable to God their teſty mood of prohibiting is, if neither their own remembrance what evill hath abounded in the Church by this lett of licencing, and what good they themſelves have begun by tranſgreſſing it, be not anough, but that they will perſwade, and execute the moſt *Dominican* part of the Inquiſition over us, and are already with one foot in the ſtirrup ſo active at ſuppreſſing, it would be no unequall diſtribution in the firſt place to ſuppreſſe the ſuppreſſors themſelves; whom the change of their condition hath puft up, more then their late experience of harder times hath made wiſe.

And as for regulating the Preſſe, let no man think to have the honour of adviſing ye better then your ſelves have done in that Order publiſht next before this, that no book be Printed, unleſſe the Printers and the Authors name, or at leaſt the Printers be regiſter'd. Thoſe which otherwiſe come forth, if they be found miſchievous and libellous, the fire and the executioner will be the timelieſt and the moſt effectuall remedy, that mans prevention can uſe. For this *authentic* Spaniſh policy of licencing books, if I have ſaid ought, will prove the moſt unlicenc't book it ſelf within a ſhort while; and was the immediat image of a Star-chamber decree to that purpoſe made in thoſe very times when that Court did the reſt of thoſe her pious works, for which ſhe is now fall'n from the Starres with *Lucifer*. Whereby ye may gueſſe what kinde of State prudence, what love of the people, what care of Religion, or good manners there was at the contriving, although with ſingular hypocriſie it pretended to bind books to their good behaviour.

John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY Octavo™

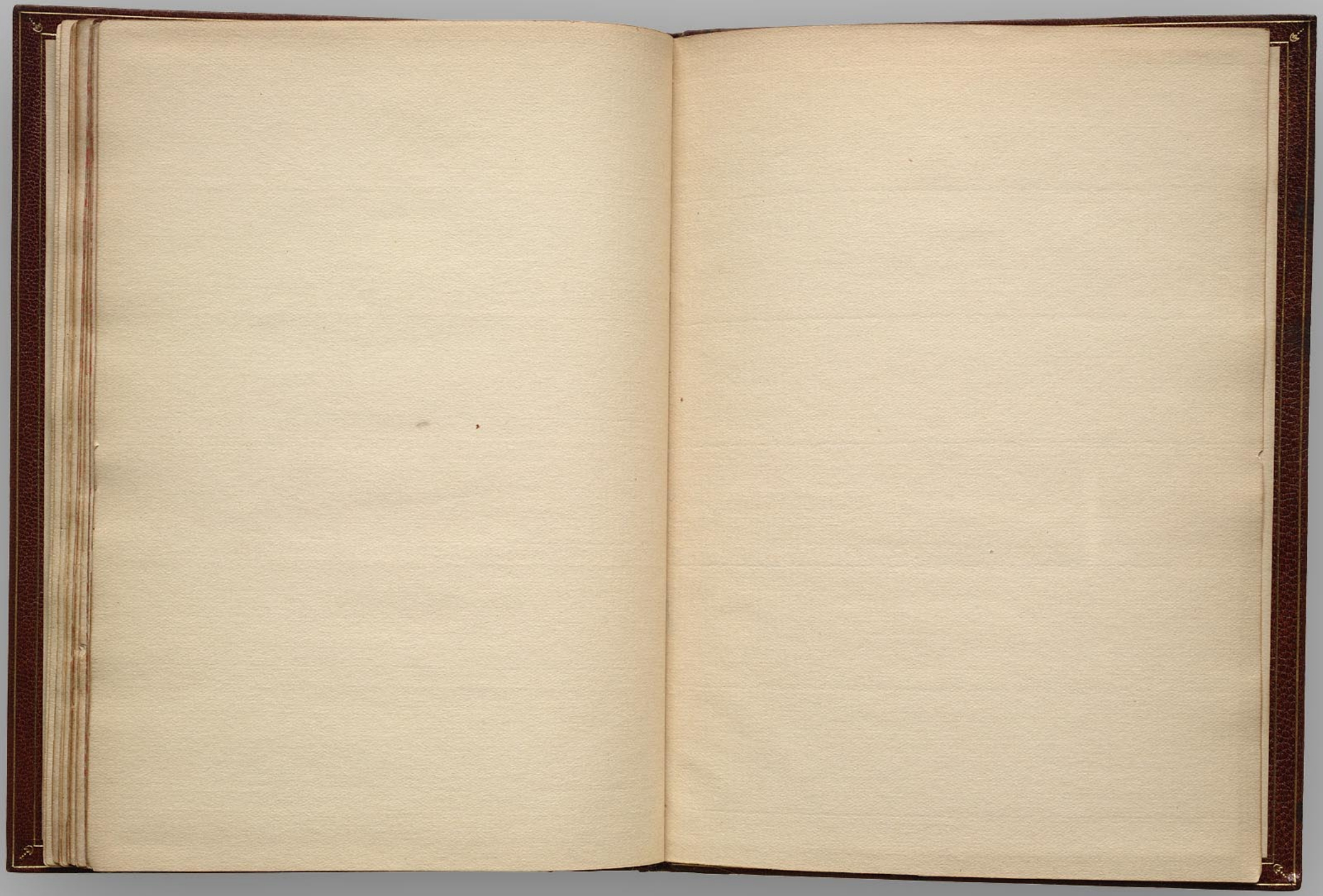
And how it got the upper hand of your precedent Order ſo well conſtituted before, if we may beleeve thoſe men whoſe profeſſion gives them cauſe to enquire moſt, it may be doubted there was in it the fraud of ſome old *patentees* and *monopolizers* in the trade of book-ſelling; who under pretence of the poor in their Company not to be defrauded, and the juſt retaining of each man his ſeverall copy, which God forbid ſhould be gainſaid, brought divers gloſing colours to the Houſe, which were indeed but colours, and ſerving to no end except it be to exerciſe a ſuperiority over their neighbours, men who doe not therefore labour in an honeſt profeſſion to which learning is indetted, that they ſhould be made other mens vaſſalls. Another end is thought was aym'd at by ſome of them in procuring by petition this Order, that having power in their hands, malignant books might the eaſier ſcape abroad, as the event ſhews. But of theſe *Sophiſms* and *Elenchs* of marchandize I skill not: This I know, that errors in a good government and in a bad are equally almoſt incident; for what Magiſtrate may not be miſ-inform'd, and much the ſooner, if liberty of Printing be reduc't into the power of a few; but to redreſſe willingly and ſpeedily what hath bin err'd, and in higheſt autority to eſteem a plain advertiſement more then others have done a ſumptuous bribe, is a vertue (honour'd Lords and Commons) anſwerable to Your higheſt actions, and whereof none can participat but greateſt and wiſeſt men.

The End.



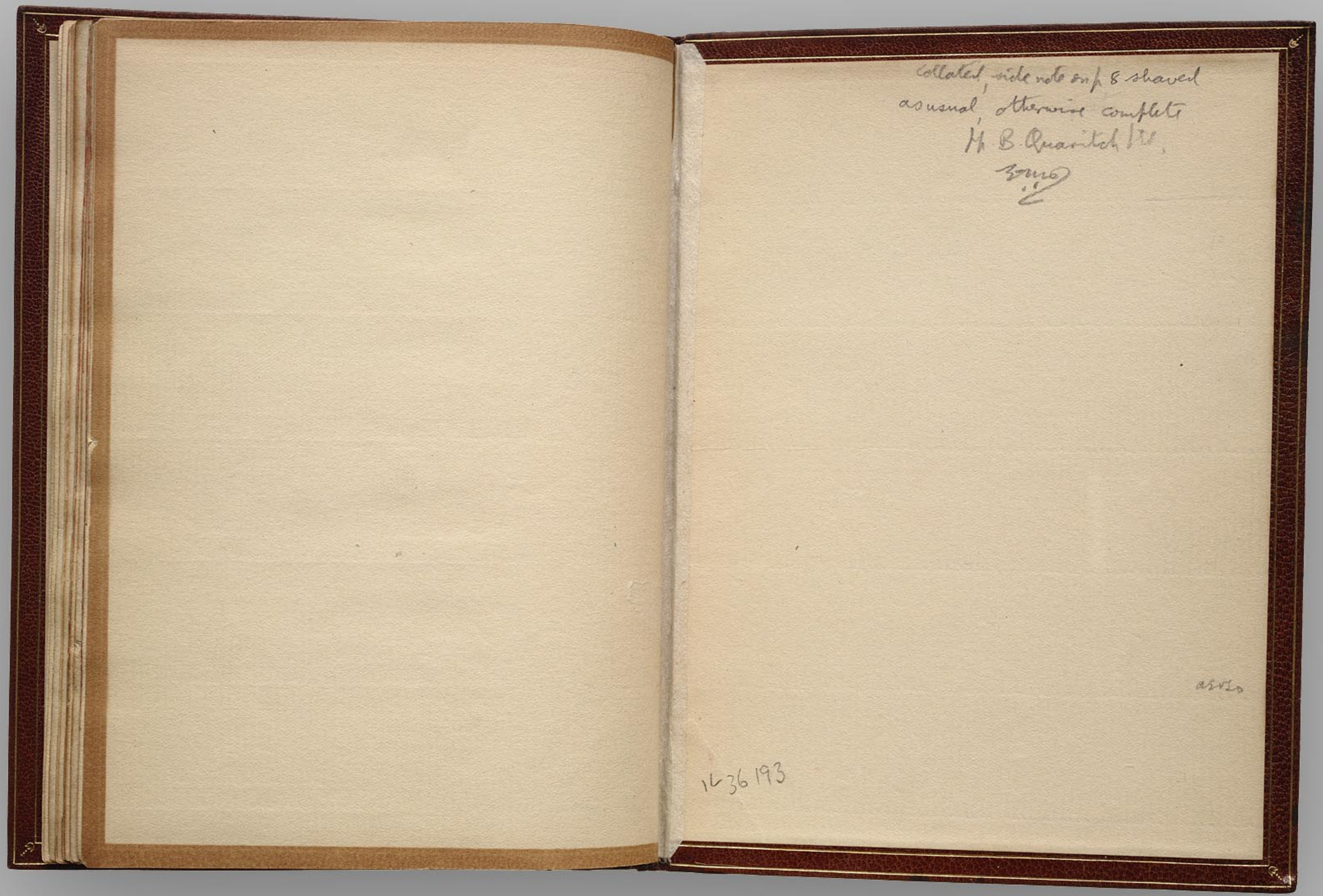
John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY

Octavo™



John Milton. *Areopagitica*. London, 1644. BRIDWELL LIBRARY

Octavo™


Collated, side note on p. 8 shaved
as usual, otherwise complete
H. B. Quaritch Ltd.
1644
A5v Lo
1L 36 193